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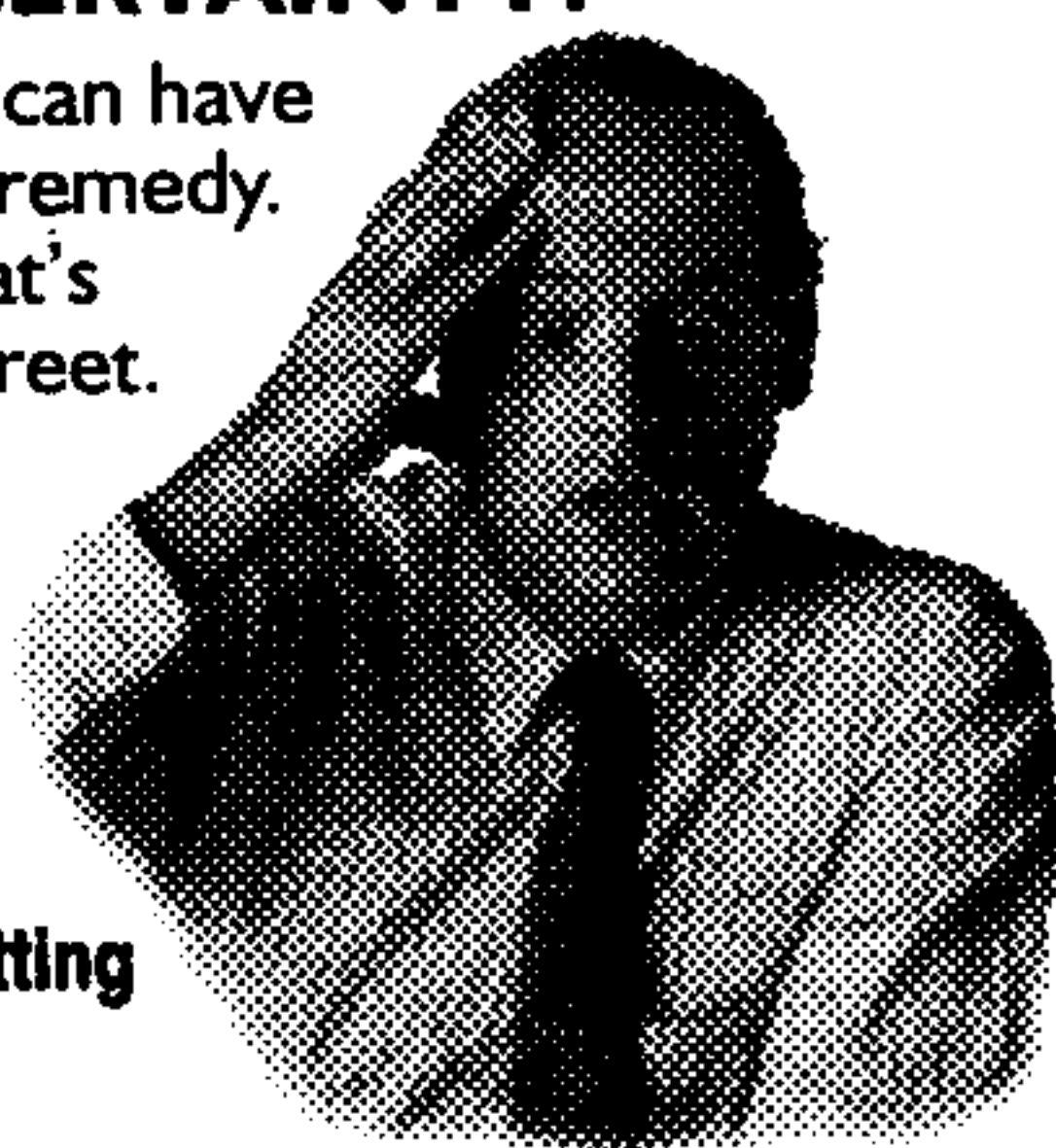
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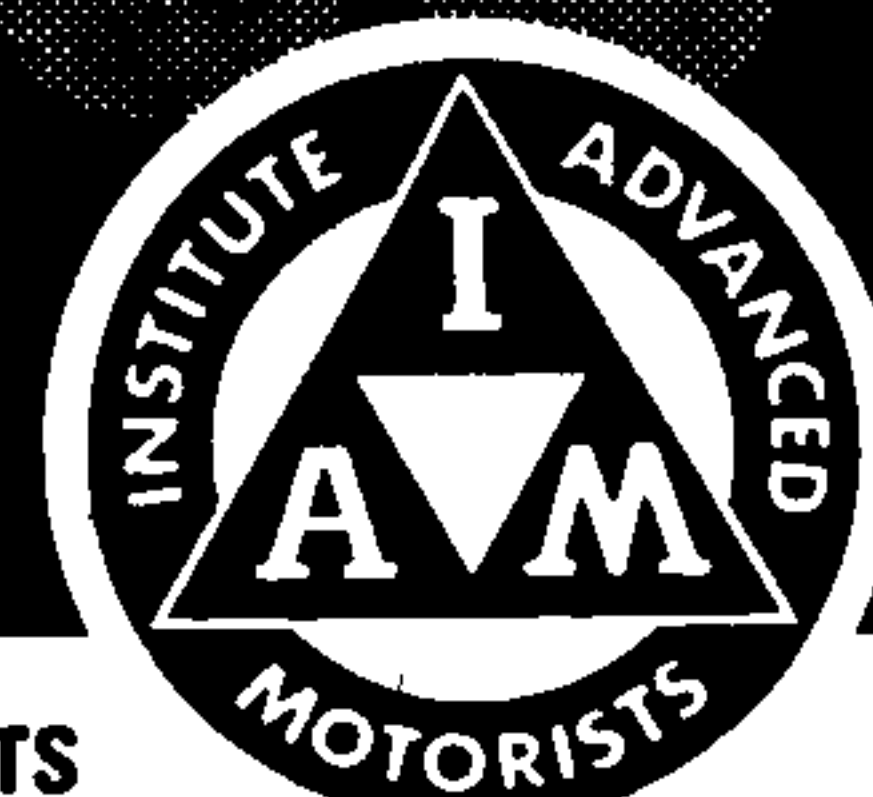
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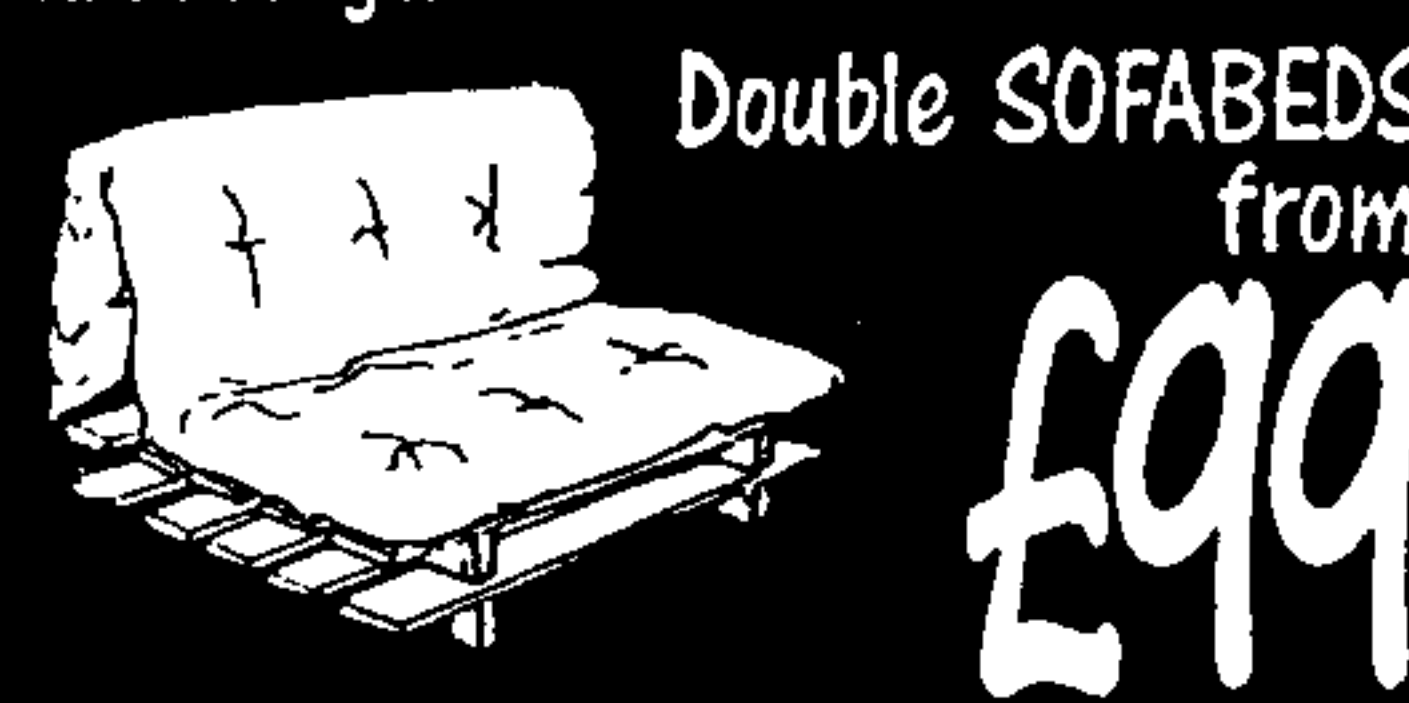
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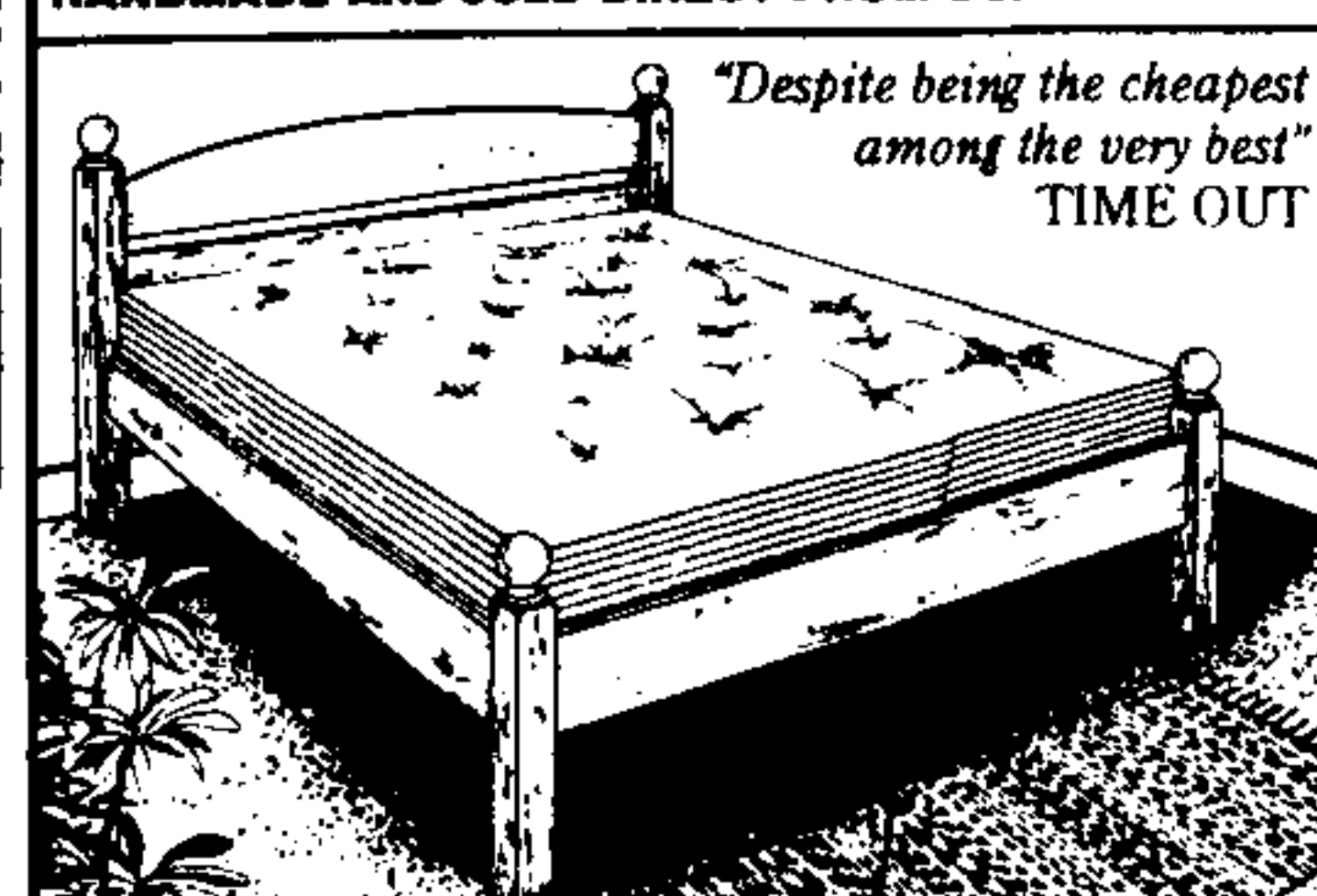
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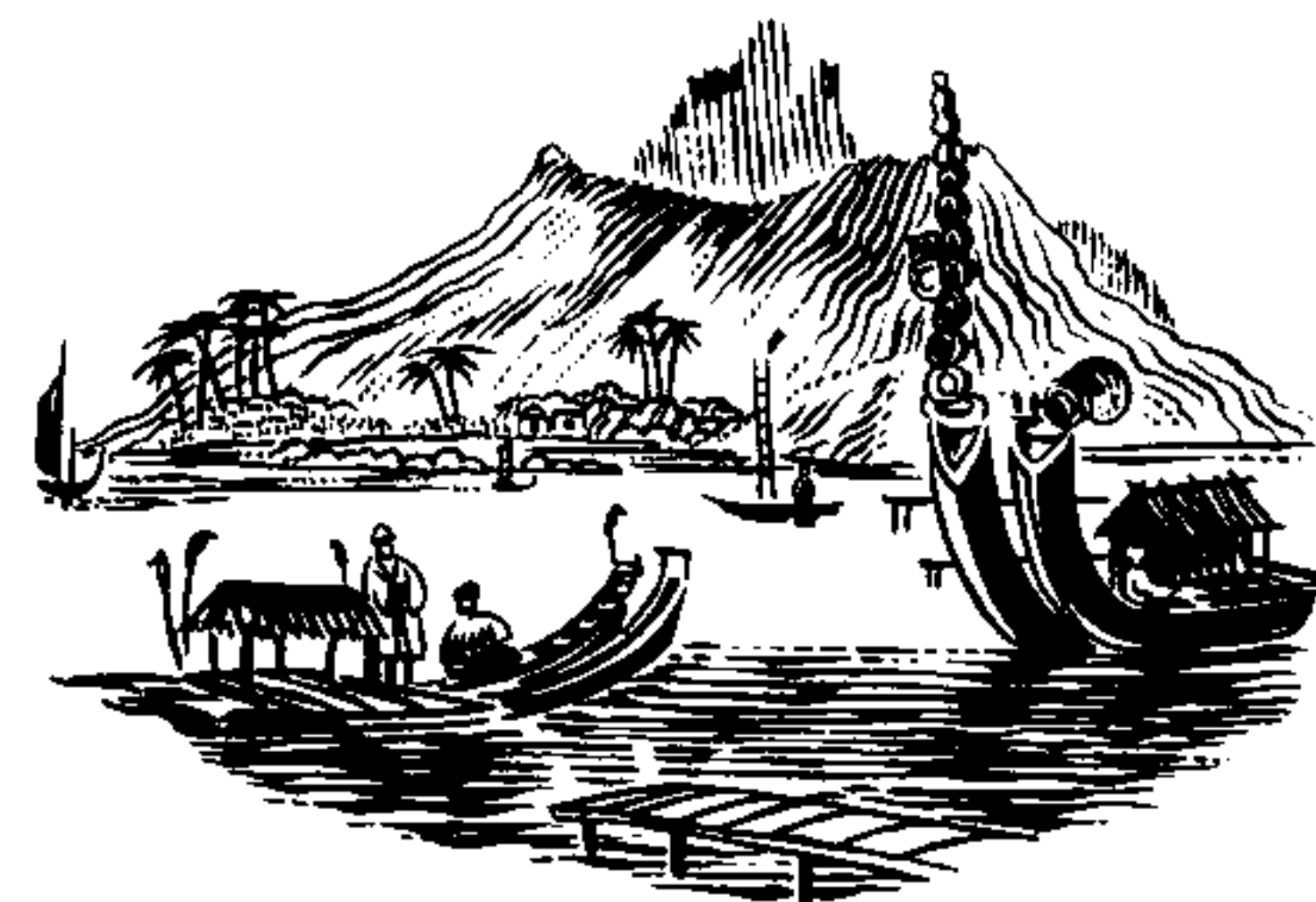
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Gnome

AS HIS contribution to the week of national celebrations in order to mark the acquittal of the Maxwell Brothers, Lord Gnome would like to reprint in full the defence which triumphed over the Serious Fraud Office and led the jury to their unanimous verdict of not guilty on all counts.

That Defence in full

1. Our father was innocent.
2. If he wasn't innocent then we were because we only did what he told us.
3. Er...
4. That's it.

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YES, IT'S CROSSO-MANIA!

For this week only, there is no Crossword, so there will be a roll-over double prize of £200 next issue!



"He wants kids - she doesn't"

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IMMEDIATELY after Robert Maxwell's death almost every hack and politician in the land agreed that he had been a splendid fellow.

A month later, following exposure of his misdeeds, they all hastened to assure us that they had known he was a crook all along. *Private Eye's* stance against Maxwell and its years of investigative stories about him were widely seen to be vindicated.

Now, however, a new revisionism is creeping in. It has been impossible to say anything derogatory about Cap'n Bob for the past year or more because of the rules of contempt of court. *Private Eye* promised not even to mention Robert Maxwell until after the trial following a dressing-down by the judge during the proceedings. We accepted the judge's ruling against a jokey comparison between the late Robert Maxwell and Nick Leeson. We gave an undertaking to refrain from further comment so as not to prejudice the trial.

The trial is now over and the verdict has been given. The sons have been found innocent. However, Robert Maxwell cannot indefinitely gag the press from his grave.

The press should not, and the *Eye* cannot, pretend that history did not take place. Having first revealed the pension fraud and having written hundreds of pieces about Maxwell's activities over the years, it would be ludicrous to keep quiet on the subject now.

Memories of his crimes are, however, already beginning to fade and the more feeble pundits are fondly concluding that old Cap'n Bob was nothing more than a loveable rogue.

Here, for instance, is Lord Rees-Mogg in Monday's *Times*: "Among the facets of his extraordinary character there was a genuine desire to do good... He gave splendid birthday parties... In the 1970s and early 1980s Maxwell made a lot of real money for himself and his shareholders... He did not, I think, intend that Mirror Group pensioners should be deprived of their money... He had bigness, courage, imagination and a bear-like Slav charm."

It was, of course, precisely this attitude (say what you like about old Bob, he gets things done) that enabled the fat pension plunderer to get away with it all in the first place.

There may well be further revisionist assessments in the next few weeks. All contributions gratefully received.

ONE likely explanation for the jury's verdict is that the City of London was so cavalier in its dealings with Robert Maxwell and his pension funds that it seemed wrong to single out his sons for imprisonment.

The long line of Maxwell advisers included Coopers & Lybrand, the accountants who audited the accounts very much as Maxwell wanted them to; Goldman Sachs, his faithful investment advisers who prompted (and profited from) his disastrous scheme to boost his company by promoting a Guinness-style "share support" scheme; Midland Bank, which conspired in a one-day £300 million loan to cover up a hole in Mirror Group Newspapers before it was floated as a public

COLOUR SECTION

company; and the National Westminster Bank, whose chief executive of corporate finance, John Melbourn, promised Maxwell he could at any time draw on a £200 million "float" (hence the Maxwell family's constant references to "Melbourn's back pocket").

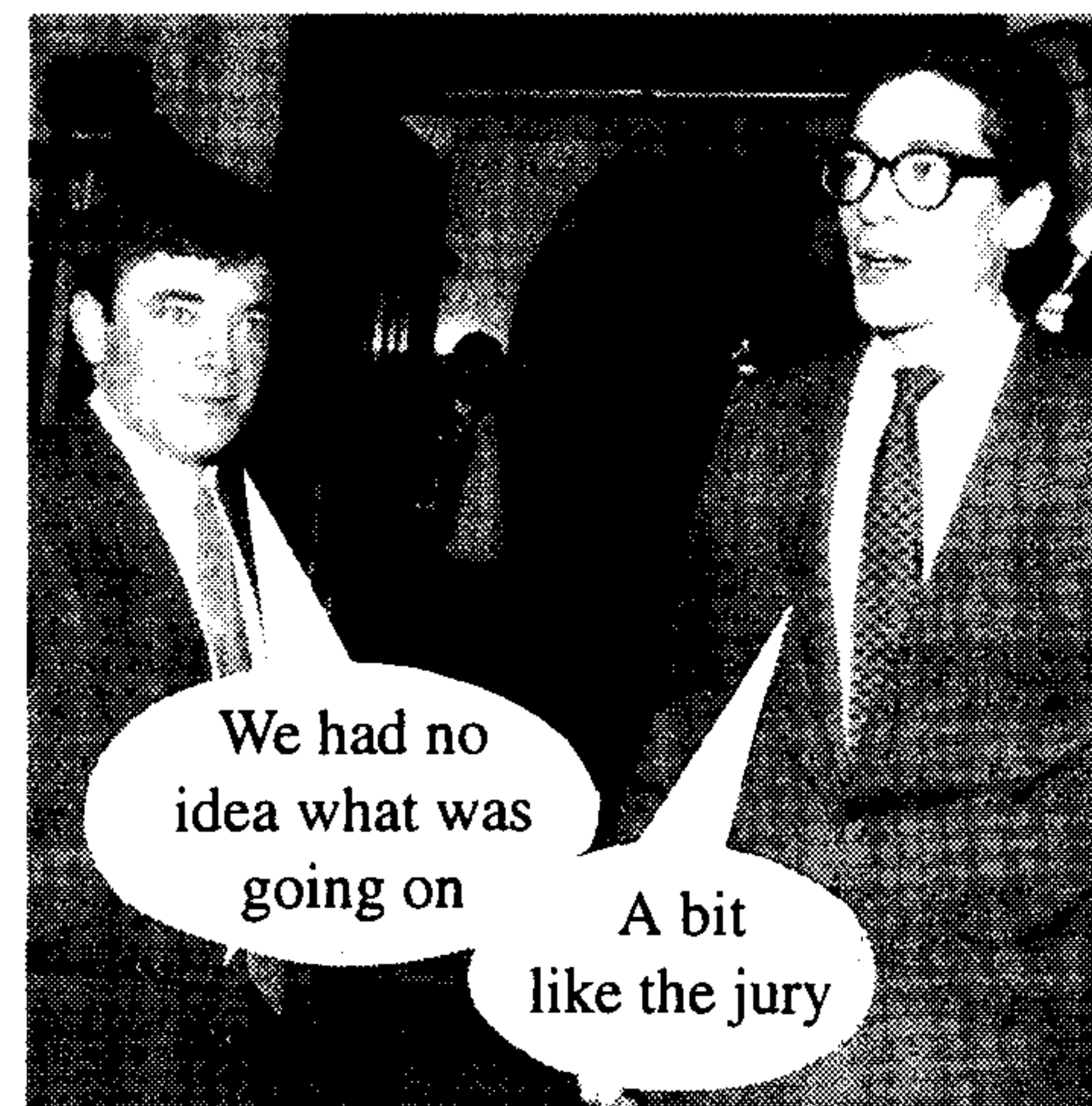
A year ago Coopers & Lybrand, Goldman Sachs and Lehman Brothers were among the many top finance houses and accountants who contributed £276 million to fill the hole in the Maxwell pension fund. The money was handed over without admission of any liability, but no one believes that any of the firms would have contributed a penny if they had not felt at least partly responsible for betraying the Maxwell pensioners. None of these advisers was even charged by the Serious Fraud Office, which is riddled with leading top lawyers and accountants from the City.

Why did so many City institutions grovel so low to Maxwell, and offer him whatever he wanted? The answer goes back to the beginning of the 1980s when Maxwell took control of the country's biggest printing company, BPC.

The firm was effectively bankrupt, and the big clearing banks, led by NatWest, faced huge losses once they put in a receiver. Instead they put in Robert Maxwell, who bullied his way through the company, sacking half the staff and terrorising the rest. With half the employees working twice as hard, the group struggled back into profit and Maxwell was hailed as a hero in the City. The slickers applauded warmly and lent hundreds of millions to the man their own inquiry had dubbed unfit to run a public company as he took over Mirror Group Newspapers and embarked on a takeover spree which ended in his ruin.

IN OUR issue of 3 November last year we referred to the appointment to the BBC board of governors of Mr Adrian White, chairman of Biwater. We suggested that Biwater was involved in the Pergau dam affair. It was not. We were confusing the contract with a larger water project in Malaysia. We also suggested that Mr White had been on business trips abroad with Margaret Thatcher. He has not. He has been on a business trip with John Major.

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STREET OF SHAME

GOSSIP at the *News of the World* sheds new light on its strange story about the Angel of Mercy, alias Princess Diana.

The rest of Fleet Street was bewildered by Clive Goodman's "exclusive" which purported to reveal Diana's secret nightly visits to the bedsides of hospital patients. No particular hospital was mentioned, and in the days after the *Screws* "scoop" the media pack fruitlessly searched the country for people who would testify that Diana had nursed them in their hour of need.

Screws hacks knew better. On the night Goodman got his scoop, the princess was snapped outside a doctor's house in London — not after visiting a patient but after a furtive visit to the doctor himself, a close male friend.

Coming days after the *Panorama* interview and the ensuing tidal wave of public sympathy, Diana was not keen for the story to break. So she phoned the *Screws* and asked for its silence — which was promised in return for a few tasty exclusives. Thus the hurried and rather thin Florence Nightingale tale was handed to Goodman on a plate.

HUMBUG really does reign supreme at the *News of the World*, it has just emerged.

Readers of the desperate rag will recall how Geoff Knights, boyfriend of *EastEnders* actress Gillian Tylforth, was slated by the *Screws* when Gillian poured out her heart to the tabloids. Knights then got off court charges after successfully accusing papers like the *Screws* of committing a massive contempt of court.

None of this deterred the *Screws* from giving the revolting Knights a backhander of £25,000 for his help with their sensational(ist) copy.

Likewise royal rat James Hewitt was slammed by the *Screws* for telling all about his affair with the Princess of Wales. But the two-faced rag also gave him a big cheque for his insider knowledge. His exile from polite society is being made more bearable with £60,000 from Mr Murdoch.

Busty Baywatch "star" Pamela Anderson also got a *Screws* cheque as she recovered in hospital from a suspected drugs overdose: \$100,000 was cost of her exclusive.

PRINCESS Diana continues to send a sexual frisson through Fleet Street's upper echelons.

Piers "Boy" Morgan, editor of the *Daily Mirror*, is supposed to be attempting a reconciliation with his wife. But meeting Diana recently at a Savoy function clearly unsettled the Boy. "Phwoor," he told executives all week at the once great socialist organ. "I couldn't half give her one."

Even the world's worst columnist, the *Evening Standard*'s roly-poly Peter McHackey, has fallen under her charms. After her boardroom lunch with *Standard* grandees, McHackey was dazed for days, telling anyone who would listen: "She's so misunderstood. Och, those eyes. Pools of liquid sapphire!"

McHackey had better be careful. Already his wife Carla, who is stranded in the country, has gained quite the wrong impression of the tubby hack's relationship with his secretary Caroline "Airhead" Aherne. McHackey, on his wife's instruction, approached managing editor Craig Orr suggesting his secretary be "transferred".

"It's your problem," smiled Orr sweetly. "You solve it."

THE *Sunday Mirror*, in its series "How We Keep Trim", carried some inspiring tips, beside a fetching picture, from "office worker" Zazie Barnicoat.

"My job involves hours of sitting down," gushed Zazie, 26, forgetting in her excitement to mention that she sits at the *Mirror* Group offices in Canary Wharf where she is the *Sunday Mirror* magazine's assistant picture editor.

THE *Daily Mirror*'s "amnesty" on knives, launched after the death of the headmaster Philip Lawrence, has been a huge success; and so has the *Mirror*'s campaign to raise funds for a memorial to him.

Alas, the paper's enthusiasm has run away with it. A *Mirror* executive has written to Lawrence's old school — St George's in Maida Vale — proposing that the knives handed in under the amnesty should be melted down and turned into a statue of the dead headmaster, to be erected in the school playground. The governors of St George's, unsurprisingly, have vetoed the plan in no uncertain terms.

Which clod-hopping *Mirror* man came up with this tasteless wheeze? Regular *Eye* readers will probably have guessed already: step forward, Brendan "Chuck" Parsons.

IN May 1994, under the headline **MINISTER BEDDED JUDGE'S WIFE AND DAUGHTERS**, Alan Clark made the front page of the *News of the Screws*.

In an accompanying editorial, Murdoch's moral umpires described him as a "nasty little rich boy" who was "sneering", "devious" and "boastful". It concluded: "We need protection from rotten apples like Alan Clark."

Or do we? "He has the toughest opinions in politics," it commented admiringly on 14 January this year. "He's witty, he's roguish — with a famous eye for the ladies! — and he's spent years at the very heart of government."

Why the change of moral tone? How did the rich, nasty, rotten apple become merely "roguish"? Perhaps it has something to do with the fact that Alan Clark has now agreed to write an "exclusive" weekly column for... the *News of the Screws*.

JUST before Christmas gallant *Observer* editor Andrew Jaspán suddenly realised he had forgotten to buy a present for his wife.

Not to worry: he picked up the internal phone and called Mimi Spencer, a fashion expert who edits the monthly *Madame Figaro* insert for the *Observer*'s Life section. "Could you go out and buy something suitable?" he asked.

La Spencer, understandably annoyed by this outrageous request, decided to get her revenge. Accompanied by her assistant she set off on a tour of London's most expensive designer boutiques (Donna Karan, Agnès B) and returned with the most unsuitable gifts she could find: an extremely skimpy mini-dress and a plastic see-through handbag, both of which made a gratifyingly large dent in Jaspán's bank balance.

As might be expected, relations between Spencer and Jaspán never recovered: she has now left the *Observer* and taken a less stressful job as fashion editor of the *Evening Standard*.

JUST FANCY THAT...

NOBODY knows anything — and certainly not at the *Times* or the Press Association's news library.

The latter, in a diary of events sent to subscribers, has 2 December marked as a special day: "Fidel Castro died 40 years ago."

WHEN rumours of the *Mirror* scoop on the gangland shooting of the dealer who sold ecstasy to Leah Betts reached Charlie "Gorbals" Wilson, acting editor of the *Independent*, Gorbals was desperate to share the exclusive.

It seems he was too shy, however, to ask staff on the *Indie*'s sister paper within *Mirror* Group what the story was, and so recruited a reluctant *Indie* night production editor, David Marsh, to travel to MGN's Watford printing works to get the low down.

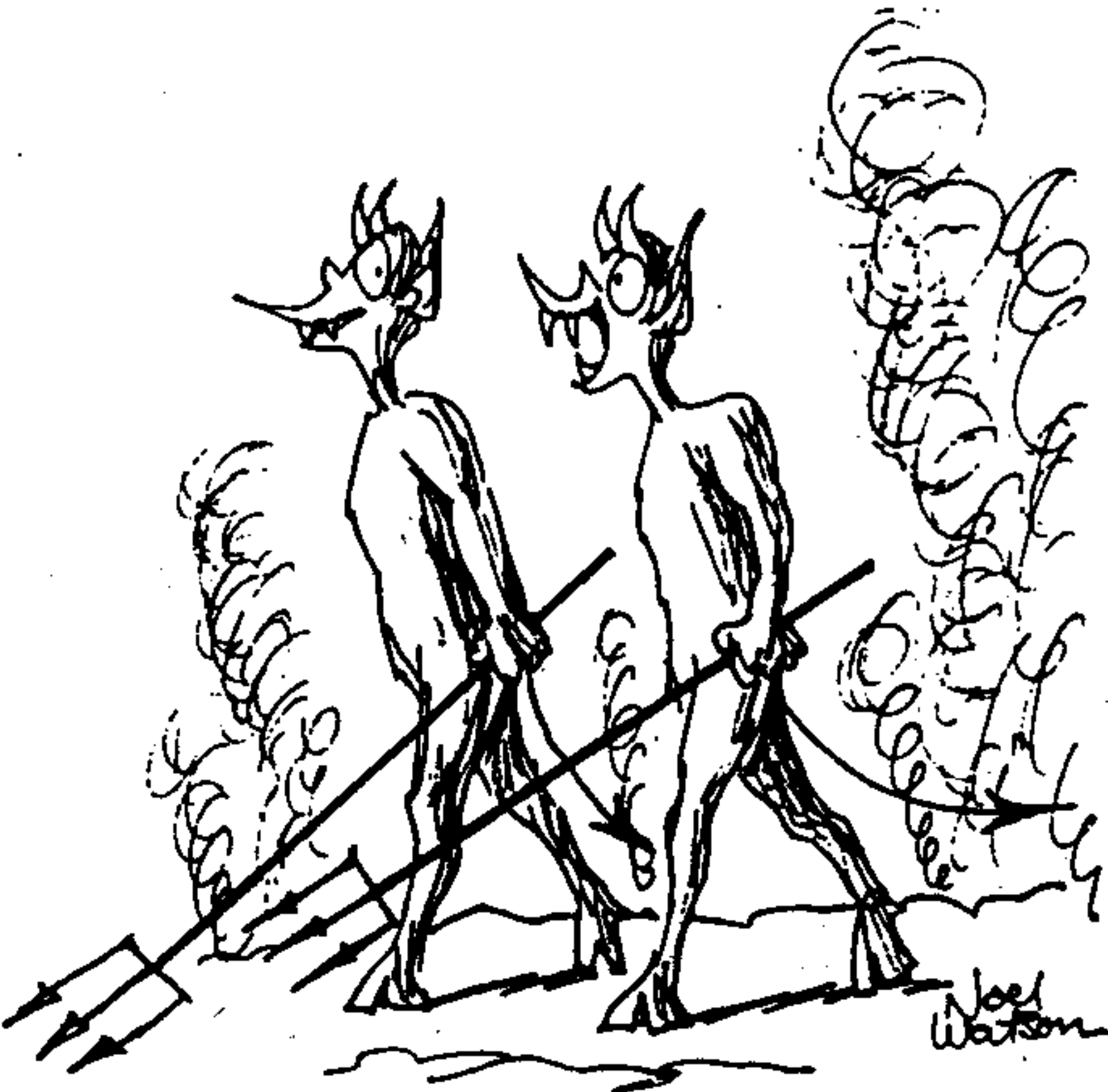
As a member of the production staff, Marsh had security access to the building. Gorbals ordered that once he was inside he should collar an early copy of the *Mirror* and phone the newsdesk with the scoop — which the hapless Marsh obediently did.

THE *Daily Express* carried a gushing report of the visit by Princess Diana and her two sons to the Centrepont hostel for the homeless earlier this month: "Prince William shares in a lesson in caring. It's what every modern prince needs to know in the caring '90s. How to spot someone less fortunate than himself. Someone, in short, who could do with a royal helping hand."

That was on page three. Five pages later, under the heading "Patronising and Pointless Diana", there was an editorial. "Who wants to be viewed as an exhibit in a poverty theme park?" it thundered indignantly. "No wonder some of Centrepont's clients complain of being patronised."

On page 40, in the new Life section (motto: "This, in short, is where Life is"), Rachel Billington returned to the theme. "It seems that the inhabitants of this shelter did not feel patronised," she revealed. "Anyone I have talked to about her charitable work has, without exception, praised her conduct and insisted she has done nothing but good."

Confused? It's all part of the service in what the *Express* has rightly described as "one of the most exciting innovations in British newspapers for years".



"Let's go and scare the hell out of the Church of England!"

PERHAPS the most amazing sentence written about the Maxwell case was in a *Daily Mirror* leader on 20 January entitled TRIUMPH OF GOOD OVER EVIL. "No legacy remains of Maxwell's corruption and abuse of this newspaper... the final traces of the Maxwell era have gone," it trumpeted.

No legacy, no trace? Well, none that is except the company chairman, Sir Robert Clark, brought on to the board of *Mirror* Group Newspapers (MGN) by Robert Maxwell, whose company Clark had served faithfully for many years while a banker at Hill Samuel.

Clark took over as chairman soon after Maxwell died. He was greatly assisted by that other great Maxwell legacy to the group, Charlie "Gorbals" Wilson, whom Maxwell brought on to the board to take charge of the ailing *Sporting Life*.

After Maxwell's death, Wilson and Clark conspired to appoint a new chief executive, David Montgomery, who scraped in by a vote of three to two on the board (the third pro-Montgomery vote came from Roger Eastoe). As soon as Montgomery took over, Clark was confirmed as chairman, Wilson as managing director and Eastoe as deputy managing director; and at once the board members applied themselves to the solemn (and very Maxwellian) business of awarding themselves lucrative share options.

Clark and Wilson were both on the *Mirror* board in the first nine months after it was floated and before Maxwell died. Somehow they managed not to notice that the £100 million profit made by the group in those months was swiped by Maxwell to plug leaks in the rest of his empire.

Clark's and Wilson's performance at *Mirror* Group Newspapers has been closely examined by department of trade inspectors, whose report was finished long ago but was not published for fear of interfering with the course of justice in the trial of Kevin and Ian Maxwell. Now it can be published and reveal all about the Maxwell legacy at the *Mirror*.

WORLD OF TAKEOVERS

LAST week, as an unwelcome takeover by Granada looked ever more likely, Trust House Forte played its trump card — calling in debts from the many hacks who have enjoyed freebies and jaunts from the company.

The media bombardment began on Tuesday with a long piece in the *Financial Times* by William Shawcross, claiming that Granada would “destroy” THF because of its obsession with “the short-term balance sheets”. As he admitted, he had an interest to declare: his wife, Olga Polizzi, is the daughter of Sir Charles Forte and a main board director of the company.

The next day — in the new, revamped *Telegraph* — it was the turn of Paul “Loonybins” Johnson to attack the men and women “whose hearts and heads are dominated by balance sheets”. A victory for Granada, he claimed, “will raise serious questions about the way they are allowed to exercise undemocratic power”. It may seem odd for a born-again capitalist such as Johnson to discover, all of a sudden, that free enterprise is undemocratic — but he too had an interest to declare. In recent years, he confessed, he had been on Forte-financed freebies to the Hotel Bristol in Warsaw and the Hotel Eden in Rome. “In both cases Olga Polizzi, Lord Forte’s daughter, was in charge”.

On Friday, the 93-year-old Lord Shawcross wrote to the *Times* to warn, rather melodramatically, that a Granada takeover would be “a tragedy for this country”. As he conceded: “I should say that I also have a family connection to the Fortes.”

The aptly-named Taki also declared an interest. But, he informed *Sunday Times* readers, “even if I weren’t a good friend of Olga Polizzi, Sir Rocco Forte’s sister, I still would be 100 percent on the Forte side.” Most generous.

Finally up popped Sir John Junor in the *Mail on Sunday*. “I hope the pundits are wrong and shareholders stay loyal to Forte,” he wailed. “But, if they don’t, I will be among the mourners.” And no wonder: although he neglected to mention it, Sir Jonah too has been the grateful recipient of Forte hospitality over many years.

Would a Granada-run Forte continue to be so generous — or would the supply of invitations to these old buffers disappear? If Granada’s obsession with “balance sheets” led it to stop pouring booze down the throats of thirsty hacks, then clearly a takeover would indeed be a national tragedy.

HARRODS boss Mohamed Fayed continues to cultivate close relations with the press.

Selected hacks were invited to wander through his Knightsbridge store at Christmas time, without the bother of having to stop at the till. Now Fayed is said to be in talks with the charming PR man Brian Basham about the possibility of taking over the *New Statesman*, the troubled left-wing weekly.

Shortly before Christmas, when the oily Basham was planning a boardroom putsch, he confided to a fellow-conspirator: “What the magazine needs is more radical lifestyle issues — like, why is Quaglino’s so expensive?”

Meanwhile the Harrods boss, pursuing his vendetta against the Major government, is already spending large amounts of money preparing dummies for a projected Sunday title. Mohamed denies the money comes from the Sultan of Brunei, the world’s richest man, as everyone thinks. Pity. The *New Sultan* would be a catchy title.

THERE was a glaring gap in *Eye* 888 in our story about the silence of Kent chief constable David Phillips when his chauffeur, Robert Paling, was up in court for driving the sleeping chief Knacker down the motorway at 110mph.

Paling was given an absolute discharge after telling magistrates his boss had told him to “put his foot down” and get him home early. But the chief constable did not appear in court to confirm or deny this version of events.

The *Eye* story did not mention the subject of the Loughborough University lecture from which the chief constable was being driven so speedily. It was “the right to silence”, which, the chief constable argued passionately, tipped the balance in favour of the guilty.

HALLO!

THE HEARTWARMING COLUMN



HALLO!

UNLIKE tight-fisted Brenda, Sheik Hamad bin Ghalifa al-Thani knows how to give a girl a good time. Only days before her “debt crisis”, la Fergiana jetted to Qatar as guest of the amusing emir.

His highness, after a little prompting from la Fergiana, not only foots the bill for her entire entourage, but peels off a \$75,000 donation to her charity, Children In Crisis. Sarah, overcome, made a moving speech which conclude poignantly: “All the children of the world should have Nintendo games, Doc Marten boots and be allowed to wear torn jeans if they want!”

Fergie had been freebied in for the annual Qatar open tennis tournament, but her desert hosts became exceedingly alarmed by the attention she was paying to handsome Austrian star Thomas Muster, currently number three in the world tennis rankings.

Indeed, so impressed was the duchess with Muster’s forehand that she chose to travel with him to Australia rather than return to London. Spitefully the British embassy refused to issue her with a first class ticket, but some hours later the ticket was acquired (by a mystery benefactor).

At the stopover in Bahrain la Fergiana embarrassed local diplomats, pressurising them to allow 14 tennis players into the VIP lounge. She then leaned on Gulf Air to upgrade them all to first class. Throughout, the charming Fergie sat next to the left-handed Muster, but the Marquesa is assured no impropriety took place. The tennis star, apparently, was “in training”.



HALLO!

WHAT oh what is happening to poor Sir Edward Heath? Late one night last week the Marquesa was shocked to find our former prime minister seated in the corner of the Finborough Arms, a lively public house in the seedier bit of Earls Court that is frequented by muscular Irish navvies.

So much for the rumours that he is hugely rich!



Maid to be lashed
The Filipina maid Sarah Balabagan has been sentenced to 100 lashes.

Scotsman



HALLO!

MY friend, the late Hon Ursula Wyndham, was a woman of admirable rudeness.

Once, I am told, she was on a posh Hellenic cruise where she met the famous theatrical designer Julia Trevelyan Oman (married to Sir Roy Strong, also on the cruise).

“I can’t think why you call yourself by a different name from your husband,” said Ursula. “You must be so worried that someone will say to you ‘Isn’t that Roy Strong, the most awful, conceited little man you ever met?’”

HALLO!

POOR Sir Richard Greenbury, who struggles to make ends meet on £890,000 a year as chairman of Marks & Sparks.

He had assumed a peerage was in the bag after chairing John Major’s toothless committee on executive greed — and he assumed wrong. And yes, there’s more bad news: his second wife Gabrielle, 20 years his junior, has been dallying with an M&S security man.

It turns out that Sir Richard himself precipitated the liaison by asking for a volunteer to act as bodyguard for glamorous Gabrielle on a walking tour in the Himalayas. The bodyguard was taken to an industrial tribunal last year after punching an employee, but he showed a gentler side to the lonely Lady Greenbury at a discreet cottage in the New Forest.

However, in keeping with M&S policy on changing goods one doesn’t want, Sir Richard has now slunk back to his first wife Sian and the guard is now back with his wife, too.

HALLO!

POOR Kevin Maxwell, who couldn’t stand up to his awful father! Happily, there was one occasion where he did defy him — in the all-important matter of choosing his wife, Pandora Warnford-Davis, which resulted in a breach between father and son. Luckily they were able to put this behind them.

‘The Marquesa’



IN THE TEAROOM

THE *Times* story that a group of Tory grandees was planning a Major ouster brought the prime minister to the tearoom last Thursday.

As he circulated with his favourite boyish grin firmly fixed on his face, a retinue of briefers spelled out an uncompromising message: the Brixton Boy will never go quietly for the toffs.

It seemed to work. Within minutes anyone who could plausibly represent himself as a grandee was out in the lobby denying like fury. Even poor, dim Archie Hamilton who was one of John Major's stalwarts in last year's leadership election, felt the need to issue a disclaimer. Or was it just that Sir Archibald, once a humble defence minister and now the most massive snob on the backbenches, was anxious to be recognised as a fully paid up grandee?

Of course there is a grandees' plot. But not in the Tory party. The Liberal Democrat peer, Lord Home, has been quietly taking soundings. Discreet Sunday lunches have been held in Menzies Campbell's very grand house in Edinburgh's New Town. Charles Kennedy, usually the most open and frank of the Liberal Democrat MPs, has fallen uncannily silent. But the leaking to the *Torygraph* of an internal party report setting out how useless the Lib-Dems are at politics is a sure sign that the plot has reached maturity. Paddy Pantsdown's days are numbered.

'Urquhart'

IF the position of home office minister Ann Widdecombe has been indefensible of late, so has some of the abuse levelled at her in the row over women prisoners in chains.

On the day she extolled the virtues of keeping pregnant prisoners in manacles in hospital, vulgar Labour MP Diane Abbott stormed into the Commons tea room and shrieked: "I bet that woman's never had a fuck, let alone her waters broken."

Over the years Widdecombe has suffered abuse from the right as well. When she led the Tory anti-abortion campaign the fat snob Nicholas Soames, chum of the absurd Prince Charles, said of her: "She's our non-playing captain."

HARRIET Harman's rise in the shadow cabinet is often attributed to her performances from the frontbench on treasury matters, where she developed the habit of greeting interruptions from Tory MPs by quoting back at them their manifesto commitments on taxation.

What a shame it would be if bruised Tory MPs were to interrupt her in future with a single but decisive sentence from the Labour party's manifesto of 1992: "We will end selection at 11 where it still exists."

HARRIET Harman is being selective with the truth when she claims her son won his way to a grammar school "irrespective of money".

He is going to St Olave's and St Saviour's because his parents could afford to move home — out of Harriet's poor constituency of Peckham, to a more expensive district in the catchment area of Dulwich Hamlet primary school. And that school, generally regarded as one of the best in London, has a special relationship with the grammar school.

When Harman was selected for Peckham in 1982 she said she would live in the constituency and found a home 100 yards from an earthy primary school which educated the children from a deprived housing estate. She soon decided to move to Herne Hill, outside the constituency, where her neighbours include such people as Sir Robin Butler, head of the civil service, and Lord Lester QC. And that took her into the area served by Dulwich Hamlet school, from where so many children move on to enjoy a superior education.

PATRICIA Hewitt, Neil Kinnock's pushy former press officer, may be one of the most prominent victims of the ruling against women-only candidate lists if its legality sticks.

Patricia had bought a house in Leicester on the understanding that Greville Janner, the long-standing Labour MP for Leicester West, is to stand down at the next election. If Patricia can't slide in on the women's ticket she will face strong opposition from some local male candidates.

It could be a tragic double whammy. No seat — and an unsaleable house!

JEREMY "Gaffe" Hanley, masquerading as a junior foreign minister after a disastrous stint as Tory party chairman, is determined to save taxpayers' money and show he is not a total flop as a politician.

He has agreed to sell off the internationally renowned Natural Resources Institute, which is based at Chatham, Kent, and employs 430 specialist researchers and advisers. Unfortunately it does not make much money, so redundancies and crucial research will be lost once the specialists disappear into consortiums of universities or "facilities management" private companies.

Losers, apart from redundant staff, will be developing nations, because NRI is the scientific arm of the overseas development administration (ODA) and is dedicated to reducing poverty and hardship with the use of appropriate technology.

Privatisation will threaten NRI's programmes, including conservation and management of tropical forests, environmental monitoring, development of farming systems, livestock nutrition and disease prevention.

DURING a recent prime minister's question time, John Major tried to hit back at Tony Blair's derisive remarks about privatisation.

Major noted Blair's trip to Japan and commented that "he might have been better occupied if he had travelled on the privatised Japanese railway".

Whoops! Presumably Mr Major had forgotten that 80 per cent of Japan's national rail network is still in public ownership, and that the Tories' bright idea of separating rail operation between train companies and Railtrack was rejected outright by the Japanese.

AT a rousing breakfast meeting John Major warns the captains of industry assembled at a Kensington hotel that voting Labour is "as risky as playing Russian roulette with all the barrels loaded".

Unfortunately the PM is somewhat confused ever about the mechanics of firearms.

A revolver has only one barrel; and Russian roulette involves loading one of six chambers with a live round, spinning the cylinder and then pulling the trigger. On the evidence, Major would even have trouble shooting himself in the foot.

HOW edifying to see two of our most principled knights rushing to defend the government's attempted deportation of Saudi dissident Muhammed Masa'ri.

The lead letter in the *Times* on 10 January was signed by former Tory MP Sir Dennis Walters and by ex-ambassador to Saudi Arabia Sir James Craig. "If you are for democracy and free speech you should be against Dr Masari," they opined — oddly as the kingdom of corruption is not normally associated with such things.

"If you are against decapitation, hand-chopping and the segregation of women you should be against Dr Masari," the letter raved — again oddly as these are just the sort of things that are the hallmarks of Saudi Arabia.

They sign their letter as chairman and vice-chairman of the fortnightly magazine *Middle East International* — which has been receiving £50,000 a year from the Saudi ministry of information, in addition to assorted donations from senior scions of the Saudi rulers. Why did Sir Dennis and Sir James not mention this? Surely not because they are embarrassed by their organ's heavy reliance on such a democratic and freedom-loving kingdom?

THE NEW LABOUR BOYS

1. Jon Trickett

ONE can only marvel at the careerist skills of the Blairist Leeds council leader Jon Trickett, set to take over from the late Derek Enright as Labour MP for the West Yorkshire seat of Hemsworth in the 1 February by-election.

Surprisingly Trickett wasn't always a Blairite. Back in 1980, indeed, he set up the quasi-Trotskyite Leeds Labour Left group to back Tony Benn as deputy leader of the party. After that failed he put his weight behind the more successful campaign to deselect the cultured Classics-teaching (and hence right-wing) Enright as the local MEP and replace him with a Leeds councillor, Mike McGowan (whom Trickett later tried to deselect).

Trickett then cleverly replaced McGowan on Leeds council and despite briefly dallying with the very left Leeds Labour Briefing became council leader in 1989. The highlight of Trickett's reign was Leeds's decision to import coal from Colombia — much of it mined by children — to heat Leeds schools.

The local pit closures campaign, led by Yorkshire NUM vice president Ken Capstick, was furious. Funny that it was Capstick, now an advice worker for Leeds council, who, during the current campaign to replace the recently-deceased Enright, took Trickett round the pubs and working men's clubs of Hemsworth introducing him to the people as their new MP.

IN THE Commons heroic orator Lady Olga Maitland, fragrant Tory MP for Sutton and Cheam, intervenes passionately in the Northern Ireland (emergency provisions) bill (second reading).

Olga quotes a doctor she has met in Ulster; and in the opinion of her distinguished medical expert, Olga informs a hushed House, "it is only by the grace of god that no-one has died in this spate of killings".

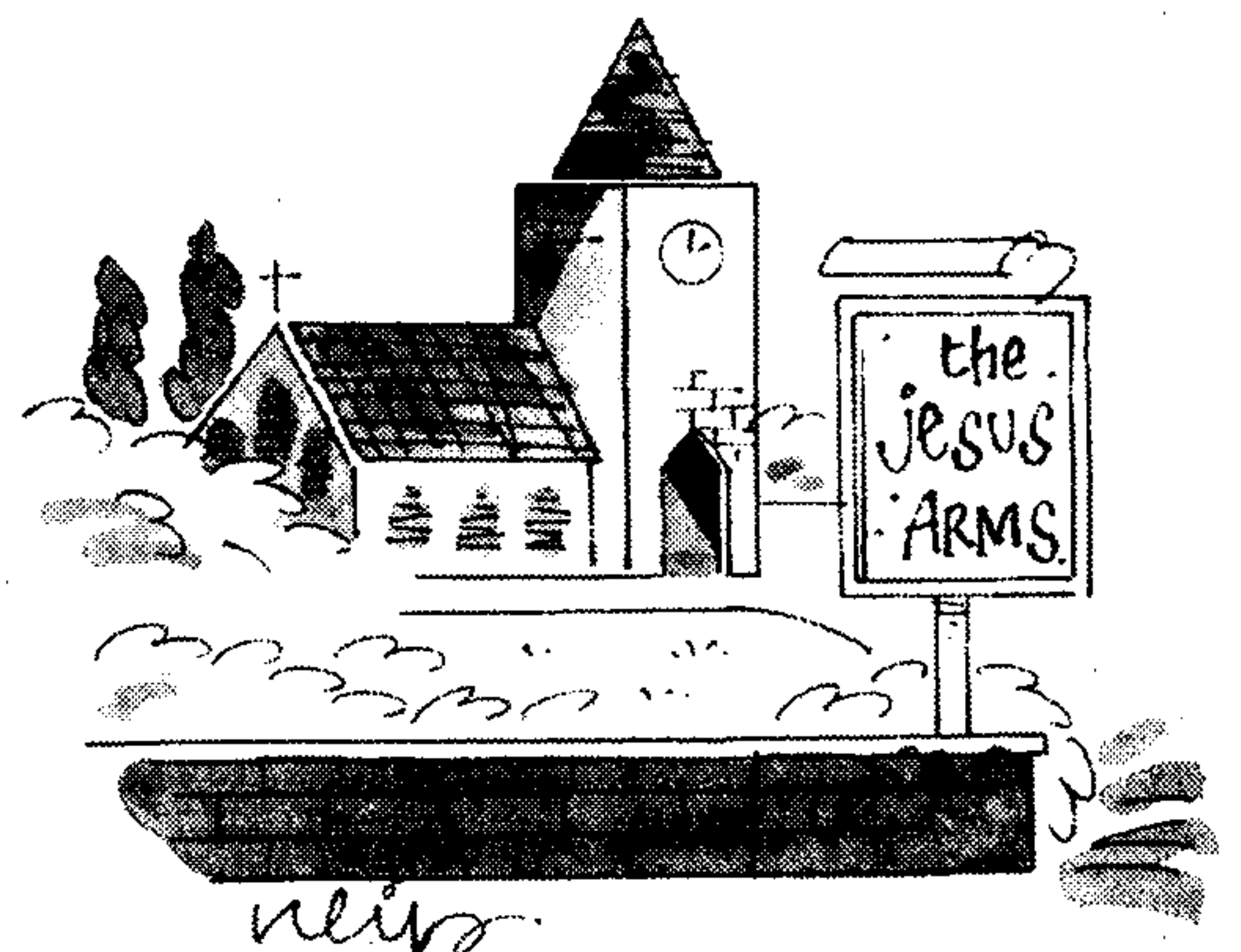
'Backbiter'

PRISON NEWS

CONTRACTS for the first two privately financed and managed prisons have been signed, and naturally firms with histories of management excellence have been chosen.

The openly derided Group 4 won the tender for Fazakerly prison, along with Tory construction company Tarmac. And the contract for Bridgend prison in Mid Glamorgan was won by the SSA consortium, which includes the infamous W.S. Atkins, the Tory-friendly company which so successfully ran the Channel tunnel's construction — costs spiralled and the project was very, very late.

The firm can also claim a connection with one of the biggest disasters in Welsh building history: it was a major partner in the Hospital Design Consortium which paid £5.9 million to the government when major design faults came to light at the 508-bed Bangor hospital.



All-day opening

NOOKS and CORNERS



CLAYBURY Hospital on the north-east fringe of London stands in 235 acres of park and woodland. The hospital buildings themselves — erected in 1889-93 — cover 12 acres and, complete with Gothic chapel and Jacobean recreation hall, were designed for more than 2,000 patients.

For Claybury Hospital is one of the many huge asylums built by the Victorians: institutions which — until recently — provided a humane sanctuary in landscaped grounds for

with employment and recreation under conditions inapplicable to sane people; and to provide for all these, while the subjects are under enforced detention, a very special knowledge is required to make their lives bearable, as far as possible, comfortable."

Needless to say Claybury Hospital is now redundant. The "community" now has to look after those unable to look after themselves, so most patients have left and the North Thames regional health authority longs to sell the site and make a buck. Although the grounds are in the green belt and include ancient woodland, Redbridge borough council's unitary development plan has the area zoned for housing, business and

bringing the threat to Claybury Hospital to my attention; in fact this is but the tip of an iceberg. Britain is covered with dozens of mental asylums, usually in rolling grounds which once contained vegetable gardens for the inmates, which are now redundant under the so-called "care in the community" scheme.

This has been the medical fashion for some decades but has greatly speeded up under our wonderful Conservative asset-stripping government. Lunatics can do as they please; the only people the government wants to lock up are more and more and more prisoners. One fine Victorian mental hospital, at Banstead in Surrey, has actually been demolished to make way for yet another new prison; but the usual favoured fate for these institutions is to make way for out-of-town supermarkets and housing — if only the tiresome listed buildings can be disposed of.

At the end of last year SAVE Britain's Heritage published a report: *Mind over Matter: A Study of the Country's Threatened Mental Asylums* (available from 68 Battersea High Street, SW11 3HX, at £12.95). It is one of the most important, and depressing, of the many reports excellent SAVE has produced over the years. "Not since the Beeching axe fell on the railways," writes Marcus Binney, "has so large a slice of the nation's public architectural heritage been made so precipitately redundant. By the year 2000, 98 out of a total of 121 large mental hospitals (open in 1986) will have closed..."

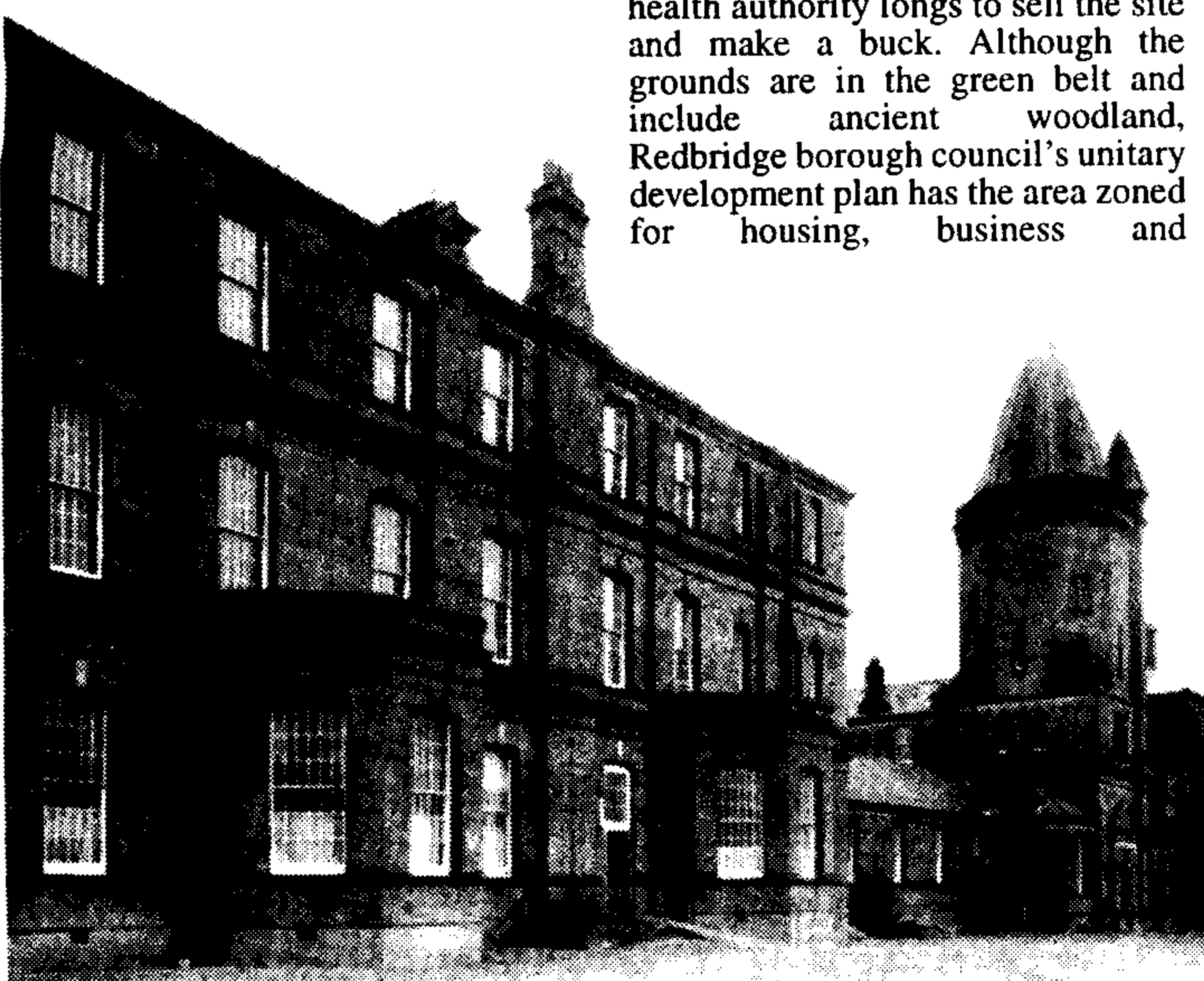
The notion that these Victorian asylums were grim is false and blinkered. They were buildings and sites on which pride and money was lavished. In 1847 there were 5,247 pauper patients housed in 21 public asylums in England and Wales; by 1914 108,837 patients were looked after in 102 asylums. And these new

asylums were usually splendid and expensive buildings, carefully planned in large open sites to create the best possible conditions for their inmates. The Holloway Sanatorium at Virginia Water, modelled on the Cloth Hall at Ypres, is a spectacular yet typical example.

But what do architecture or pious philanthropy matter to an asset-stripping government and health boards out to make money? To quote Binney again: "These mental asylums... represent the single most urgent challenge [that] the guardians of our architectural heritage have had to face... Their survival rests on finding alternative uses which will bring the necessary investment and throng of people to populate them. Yet equally if nothing is done a huge public investment will be wasted. These remarkable asylum villages were erected not only with county ratepayers' money but a vast amount of voluntary and charitable contributions. In a very real sense they are not simply assets of the NHS and the treasury, to be squeezed for every last penny. They are places which with speedy effective action can become star examples of intelligent recycling of resources."

Quite. But for this to happen, the NHS bureaucrats and the local authorities, together with their cynical planning consultants and agents, must be disabused of the notion that the best way to "market" these assets is to get the buildings down as soon as possible and break up the sites for developers. But even if the department of the environment and English Heritage get tough, as they must, when solid institutions are again needed for the care of the mentally ill when medical fashion changes again — *as it will* — we shall find one of the greatest architectural and landscape legacies from the past has been stupidly frittered away.

'Piloti'



the mentally ill. This one was designed by the architect G.T. Hine, and his compact echelon plan was so successful that it was much imitated while Hine himself went on to become consulting architect to the Commissioners in Lunacy for England.

As he wrote in 1901: "Asylums are built for people who cannot take care of themselves, and who have to be watched, nursed, and provided

community use. In fact, the borough's "environmental committee" is rather keen on a "high density residential development" and is "working with the developers to produce an acceptable scheme". Meanwhile, of course, with almost all the patients gone, the hospital is deserted and the — listed — buildings are beginning to be vandalised.

I am grateful to a kind reader for

One applauds Eric Cantona's foray into the Crystal Palace crowd as an example of post-modernism.

JULIAN BARNES
Observer

Lorna Wing is one of the most creative party organisers in Britain. She now organises a variety of events, from dinners for two to corporate lunches for 500. It was Lorna who originated the much-copied craze for shrinking dishes to canapé size, including fish and chips in tiny *Financial Times* cones and bacon and eggs the size of a 10p piece. She lives in a converted lunatic asylum in south London and eats out as much as possible.

Sainsbury's The Magazine

Buttocks are pleasing. There is something cheerful about their portliness, especially during difficult moments. They are comforting, heartening, they make you want to believe in the future. Having your fill, gazing your fill, having your hands full: it all leads to a pleasant feeling of euphoria — which explains how, for a decade now, the shape of domestic objects has constantly been reminiscent of buttocks, linking smoothness to comforting roundness. Today, roundness is everywhere — in mushroom-like precincts, spherical vacuum-cleaners or cars shaped liked round tablets of soap. Roundness makes us believe that the world can be worn away like a pebble or sucked like a sweet.

JEAN-LUC HENNING
Independent on Sunday

Pseud's Corner



You can mix and match the breakfast special in any way you want — Rita isn't fazed. She barely batted an eyelid when a few weeks ago, under the influence of an Absurdist, Ionesco-style hangover, I went in and ordered egg, egg, egg and egg.

WILL SELF
Observer

Anthony Horne of solicitors Davies Arnold, legal advisers to the nightclub entertainment industry, said: "People like to make a statement with their

bottled beer. It says who they are, what they believe in and what they're all about..."

Guardian

Jaki Irvine's video installation Losing Doris involves two ice cubes, some blind fish and a small gust of wind that blows through the space of two black and white photographs dating from the 1930s. The women in these found photographs maintain their stillness as best they can in the face of wind. Meanwhile, an unseen man is slowly seduced by an empty space.

Press release, ICA

This came on an oval plate and made a very bold visual statement: a bar of gnarled yellow at the top of composition (the chicken), then a bar of white at the bottom of the composition (the rice) within which there was a further bar of yellow (saffron). It looked quite arresting in its simplicity and symmetry; so who says minimalism is dead?

The rice was cooked to that perfect stage where each grain is fully separable, and the baby chicken was ridiculously tender and affecting. "Poor baby," I murmured to myself as I tucked in; "poor, poor baby."

WILL SELF
Observer

CONTRIBUTORS: C. Boyd, A. Nuttall, L. McCormack, T. Holman, M. Saunders, A. Non, B. Jackson.

£10 paid for entries

RETRO TV

The Brains Trust (BBC2)
The Andrew Neil Show (BBC2)

METRO TV and Copy TV are the fashion of the time, and a perfect example of each currently graces BBC2.

The Brains Trust first came to television from radio in 1955 and its revival late on Monday nights on BBC2 is part of the restoration of chat on the channel, the controller having noticed that the schedules were filling up with parodies — Alan Partridge, Mrs Merton, Larry Sanders — of a form which no longer actually existed in Britain.

The trick with Retro TV, though, is to recreate the original as closely as possible. When *Face To Face* was resurrected, for example, it kept the same music, titles, visual and vocal style. For its first week, *The Brains Trust* triumphantly followed this lesson. A.S. Byatt, Lewis Wolpert and Dr Jonathan Miller are the nearest living equivalents to the Bronowskis and other big-heads of the 50s, although the presence of Edward de Bono — the Paul Daniels of the intelligentsia — might have been a warning.

One of the questions for the first guests, though, really ought to have been: "Does the panel believe that so-called 'political correctness' is a genuine phenomenon?", because the second show in the series terrifyingly proved that it was. Gone were Byatt, Miller and Wolpert, to be replaced by the novelist Ben Okri and the feminist academic Professor Lisa Jardine, both of whom would struggle to make the subs bench for *Question*

Time, and neither of whom has ever surely been regarded as one of "Britain's finest minds", which remains the series' rubric. Their presence smelled of BBC memos about ethnic and gender "representation" on screen.

They were joined by Dr Richard Dawkins, a notorious single-issue fanatic who has no subject other than the non-existence of God, although even his well-known intellectual fearlessness failed him when Okri talked about the deep belief of his people in "a god — or gods". The plural saved him and Dawkins showed cultural respect for his views. The future of this promising revival depends on the producers realising that the whole point of Retro TV is a stopped clock.

Known to some disrespectful types at the BBC as *The Brillo*

for him the alternative trademark of jazzy waistcoats. He is also experimenting with a cheeky grin.

The proud publicity boast is that the programme is connected live by Internet, E-mail and telephone to viewers in 111 countries. Teased about his slot — weekday BBC2 afternoons at 2.10pm, a zone previously the preserve of game shows and repeats of *Horizon* — Brillo has been able to point out that he hits peak-time in Dubai and that the show goes out at breakfast time in New York, although, sadly, Worldwide doesn't actually transmit to America.

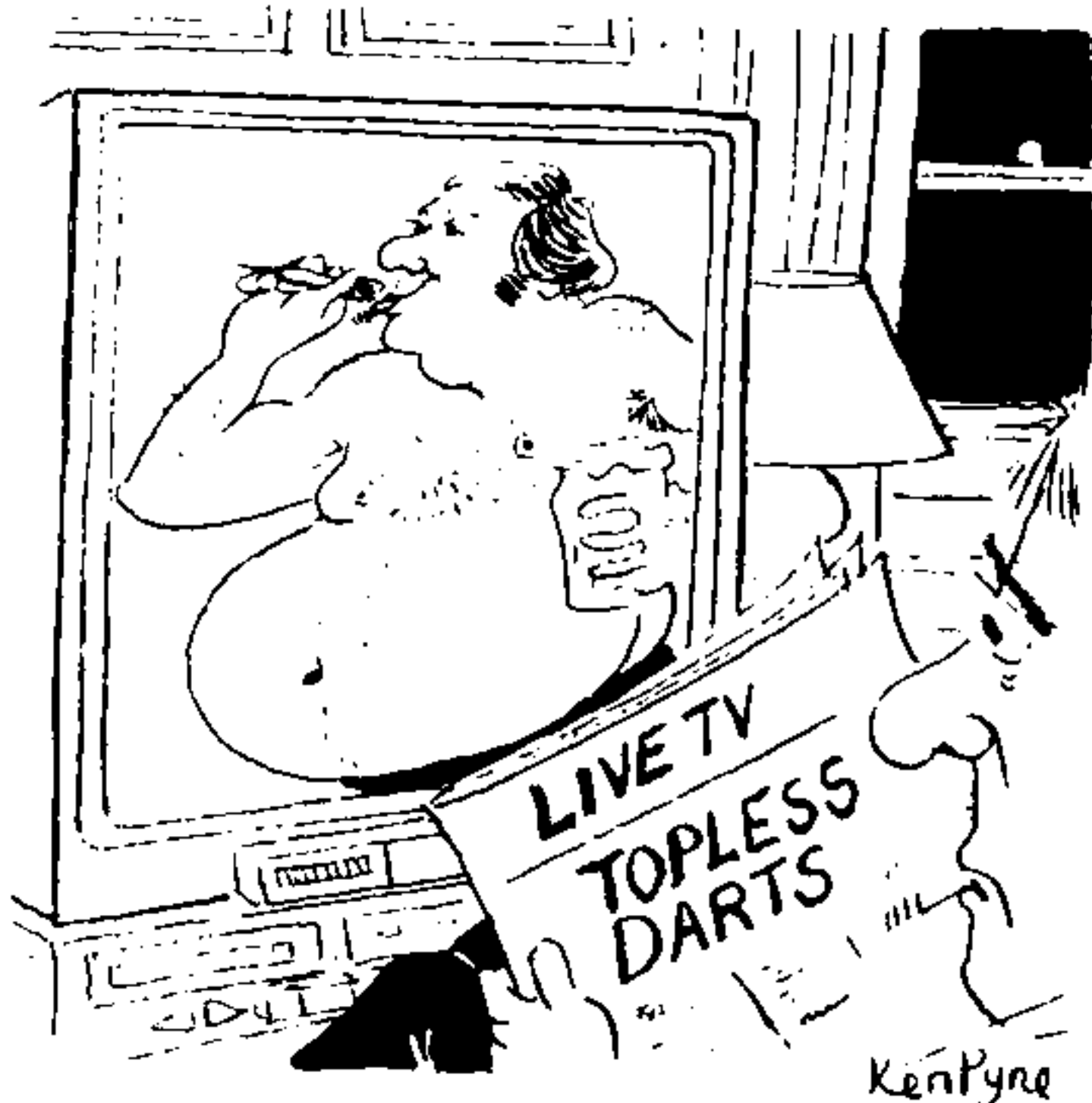
The idea is that the first studio guest is a "British newsmaker" and the second an "international newsmaker". An early proposal document gave, as a for instance, "Will Carling and then Henry Kissinger". Sadly, Will and Henry couldn't make the first show, which had to make do with a chief constable followed by Jackie Stewart. Otherwise, guests have included Petula Clark, plugging a West End show; John McCarthy plugging a book; and Kris Akabussi, evangelising God.

At the moment few of the 111 countries seem to have been represented in the phone-ins. Brillo's excitement is visible when a Dubai or Karachi

E-mail slips in between the *Call Nick Ross*-style witterings from Swindon or Cheshire. BBC2 is also said to be concerned about the almost total radio silence attending this prestigious project in the British press. They had thought Brillo's wide renown would guarantee juicy review coverage.

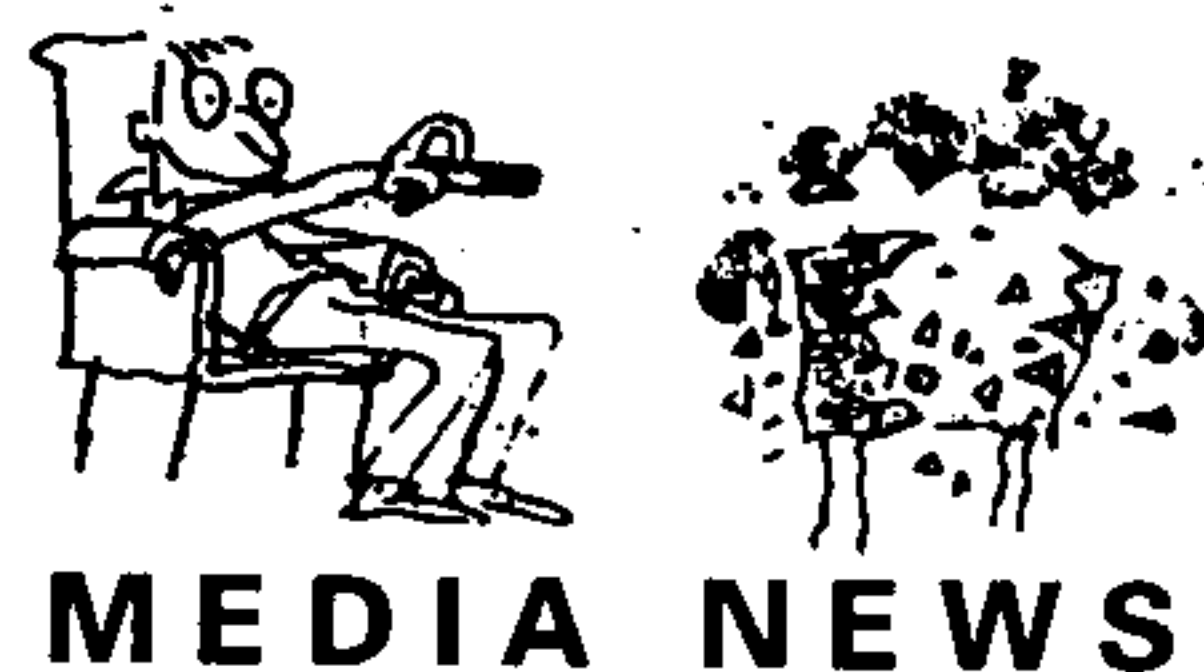
What they didn't realise is that their man has now antagonised the editors of nearly every newspaper in the country by either claiming to have been offered their jobs before they were or attempting to put together a consortium to buy their newspaper. Poor old Brillo. He's going to have to rely for his television fame on the other 110 countries.

'Square Eyes'



Trust, BBC2's new afternoon series *The Andrew Neil Show* is now in its third week and also represents part of the return to talk on TV. This, though, is not Retro but Copy TV, an attempt to nick for Britain the format of CNN's *The Larry King Show*, the world's first international chat show. *The Andrew Neil Show* is a strange hybrid, co-financed by BBC Worldwide, the corporation's foreign sales arm, and News & Current Affairs, who picked Brillo as anchor.

Larry King's famous trademark is that he doesn't wear a jacket on air, thus exposing the colourful suspenders (here known as braces) underneath. After anguished debate about whether to put Brillo in suspenders, the producers found



EVEN by his own high standards of *arslikhan*, David Frost's recent interview with Marks & Spencer director David Sieff was unusually fawning. Sieff was suitably grateful.

"Thank you very much, David, for giving me the opportunity to refute these accusations," he gushed. "The allegation of use of child labour to Marks & Spencer's is absolutely abhorrent, and we wouldn't tolerate it at all."

This orgy of sycophancy ended with Frost thanking his guest and turning to the weatherman. Assuming that the cameras were off him, Frostie then grinned at Sieff and gave a triumphalist thumbs-up gesture.

Was it not a little odd to offer M&S the right of reply before the *World in Action* documentary had even been broadcast? And to give the story top spot in the running order on a day when John Major was a guest? It seems a little less odd when one realises that Sieff and Frost are friends — and that Paradine Productions (prop: David Frost) made a deeply sympathetic one-hour film about M&S only a year ago.

Fresh from this triumph, last Sunday Frostie gave over most of his programme to an "exclusive interview" with his old mate George Bush. As a curtain-raiser to this scoop, Frostie also broadcast a video of "a previously secret conversation" he had with Bush at Camp David in March 1991.

What he neglected to add was that the BBC's *Breakfast With Frost* had bought this footage from an outside company — none other than Paradine Productions! Will John Birt tell Frostie to watch his step? Unlikely. The director-general is also a good friend; and in the 1970s, while working at LWT, Birt did a bit of lucrative moonlighting by producing Frost's interviews with Nixon and the Shah of Iran for... Paradine Productions.

Perhaps then new BBC chairman Sir Christopher Bland will call Frostie to order? Even less likely. Bland, inevitably, is yet another old chum. Trebles all round!

A PRODUCER at BBC Manchester was puzzled — and slightly startled — to receive a menacing letter from a debt-collection agency last week, warning of dire consequences if he did not send a cheque at once.

Since he was unaware of having any outstanding debts, he rang the agency and asked who the creditor was. "The BBC," came the reply.

The producer, it transpired, was a victim of John Birt's obsession with creating "internal markets". A few weeks earlier the producer had hired a conference room at the BBC's Cardiff office, for which, under the Producer Choice system, he should have been billed internally. But the bill never reached his desk. Instead of ringing him up to remind him, executives at BBC Wales immediately hired the local "enforcers" to pursue him.

The bill, incidentally, was for the princely sum of £45.83.



OF POSING AS A SERIOUS TV PRESENTER

EYE SPY

Selina Scott



IT IS good to see that rigorous Birtist standards are being maintained in at least one corner of the BBC.

Nicholas Moss, who rejoices in the title of Head of Policy Management, has sent a two-page note of "guidance" to hacks to ensure "that our approach remains in tune with public expectations".

He is particularly keen to mark the card of anyone working on programmes about the 60th anniversary of the abdication of Edward VIII. "As someone with a keen amateur interest in the subject," he writes, "I am conscious of the superficial appeal of conspiracy theories surrounding his life. While they may be true, as the Channel 4 two-parter last month claimed... personally, I very much doubt it."

So there.

THE profiles of the new chairman of the BBC governors, Christopher Bland, have all fallen for his own "rang to riches" story about how, in the mid-1970s, he invested a few bob in what seemed like a bust printing company, Caustons, and turned it round by the sweat of his brow to make him what he is today.

In fact the reason Bland was poor in the mid-1970s was his association with the First National Finance Corporation, the most spectacular bankruptcy of the 1970s banking and property collapse. He had joined the corporation as part of his lifelong quest to make a lot of money for very little effort: an ambition triumphantly achieved with the share scheme he devised while chairman of London Weekend Television.

Bland's special achievement with the scheme was the enrichment of other LWT directors and stars who were not, as he was, paid-up members of the Tory party. Chief among these was ardent socialist Melvyn Barg, who made at least £3 million. Barg has been specially useful to Bland in recent weeks, leaping to his former chairman's defence and telling anyone who'll listen that Bland is "politically OK".

JUST FANCY THAT!

FROM the digs list for theatricals working at the Grand Theatre, Blackpool:

ROOM: Mr Kevin Maxwell offers a comfortable bedroom with sink, kitchen facilities, etc, contained within it, use of separate bathroom, etc, are all included in the price of £40 per week. Call him anytime on...

BEDSIT: Ideal for single non-smoking person £50 per week. For further details telephone Mrs Maxwell on... after 6pm or weekends.

I-BSkyB

Didn't you just wish for Sky's professionalism rather than the distinctly amateurish coverage from ITV?

The Sun

CONTRIBUTOR: Simon James.

HACKWATCH: MODESTY ABLAZE

LIKE the John Lewis Partnership, national newspapers are never knowingly undersold.

Even by Fleet Street's standards, however, the present frenzy of boasting and hyping seems ever so slightly excessive. Announcing his recruitment of "two top writers" earlier this month, the new editor of the *London Evening Standard*, Max "Hitler" Hastings, described Simon Jenkins as "the most authoritative writer on London", while the dreary right-wing hackette Anne Applebaum was said to be "foremost among Britain's brightest young political thinkers".

Not to be outdone, Hastings's former paper, the *Daily Telegraph*, ran a huge puff-piece last Monday introducing its new recruits: Anne McElvoy, "the talented young writer who... will illuminate events abroad and at home"; Janet Daley, "the voice of sanity on the BBC's *Moral Maze*"; Boris Johnson, "Britain's sharpest political commentator"; Barbara Amiel, a "controversial columnist" who "will speak her brilliant mind" (and who also happens to be married to the newspaper's proprietor, though the *Telegraph* neglected to mention the fact); Stephen Glover, "the most fearless moralist in modern journalism"; and Craig Brown, "the funniest satirist of his generation". The *Daily Telegraph*, it concluded, "is the epicentre of national debate".

Phew! Doesn't this leave other papers feeling pretty inadequate? Not at all. Although the *Daily Telegraph* may have Britain's sharpest political commentator, its stablemate the *Sunday Telegraph* can console itself with "Britain's brightest political commentator", Matthew D'Ancona (*Who he? Ed.*) Meanwhile the *Daily Star*, "No 1 For News", offers nothing less than "a Party on Every Page". The *People* makes no great claims for its news coverage (unsurprisingly, given that it is non-existent) but does employ Carol Sarler — "Love Her or Hate Her... Read Britain's Sassiest Columnist". The *News of the Screws* trumps this with "The Voice of Reason" (Woodrow Wyatt, incredibly).

The *Daily Mirror* ("Honesty, Quality, Excellence... No 1 for Showbiz Exclusives") has an even more talented line-up. Brian Reade: "Britain's wittiest TV columnist." Marje Proops: "The World's Greatest Advice Columnist." Tony Parsons: "The Column. The Writer."

The *Sun* ("No 1 for Showbiz Exclusives") caps that with ease. Norman Tebbit: "Telling It Like It Is..." Deidre Sanders: "The World's No 1 Agony Aunt." Garry Bushell on the Box: "The Column That Runs on Pure Beef." And, of course, Anne Robinson: "Britain's No 1 Writer... Britain's No 1 Columnist in Britain's No 1 Paper... She's write out in front."

The battle of the superlatives is getting even more hysterical in the middle market. Here are a few of the *Daily Mail's* irresistible offerings: Simon Heffer ("The Pundit the Politicians Dread"); Baz Bamigboye ("Britain's Brightest Guide to All That's Best in Entertainment"); Andrew Neil ("The Voice of Controversy"); William Oddie ("One of Britain's Most Outspoken Theologians"). Nor should we overlook the letters to the editor: "Only in the *Mail* — The Letters Pages Where Readers Really Have Their Say." Eh?

Over at the *Sunday Express*, under new editor Sue Douglas, readers are promised "new names, brilliant reporters and authoritative commentary", including "top columnist Julie Burchill" and "Oliver James, a leading psychologist".

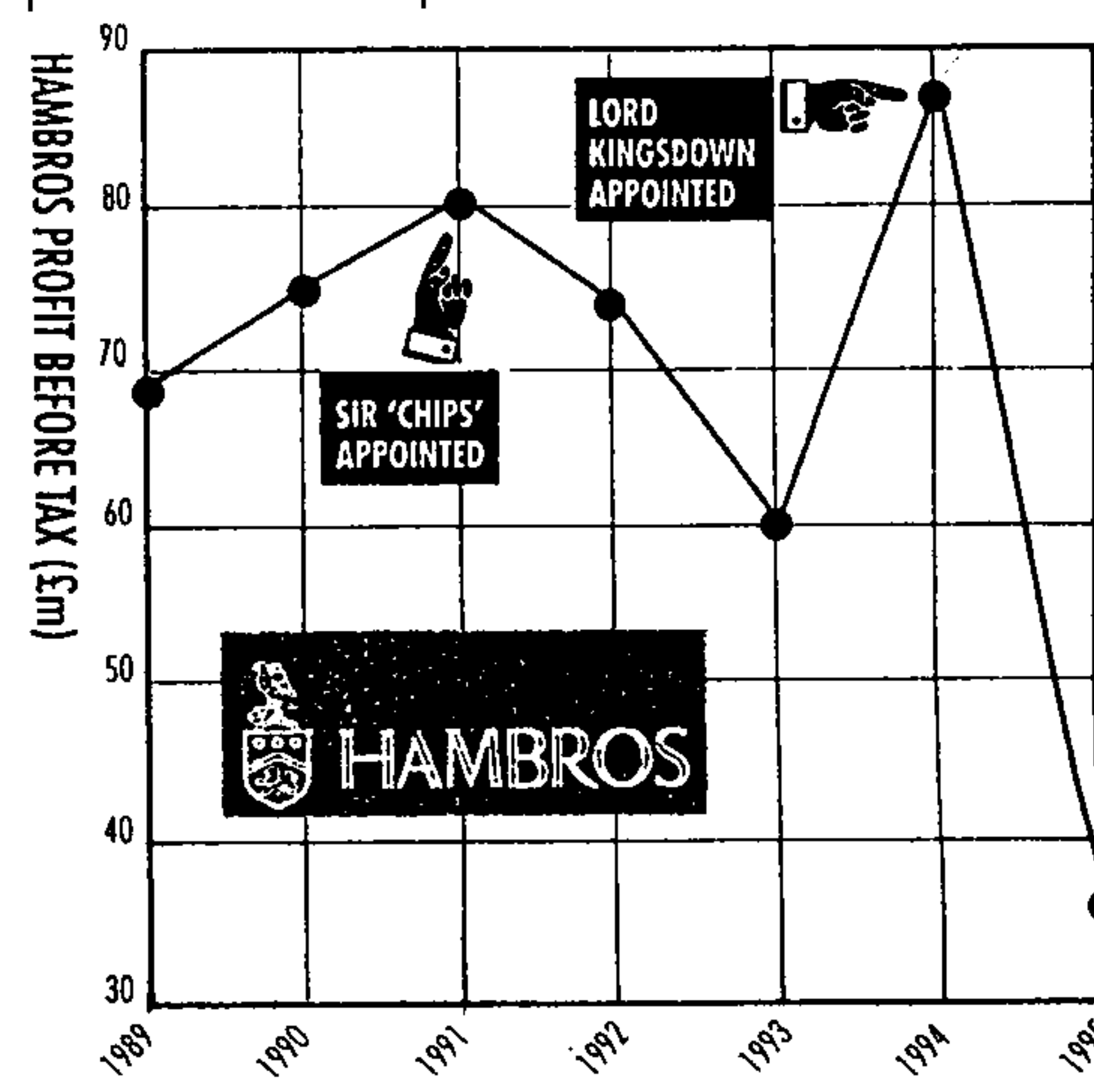
But the outright winner of the prize for self-congratulatory mania is the *Daily Express*, where incoming editor Richard Addis ceaselessly reminds his readers of just how lucky they are. The hype began shortly before Christmas with the glad tidings that he had hired Geoffrey Wheatcroft — paradoxically billed as a "leading commentator" but also "a new and exciting writer". Since then, the thrills have come thick and fast:

2 January: "The brilliant columnists for which the *Daily Express* is justly renowned, such as Peter Tory in today's paper, have a bigger and better home on Page Eleven. This is the showcase where you will be able to read some marvellous new writers who are joining the *Express* over the next few weeks..."

3 January: "We said brilliant new writers would be joining the *Daily Express* during January and today we are proud to introduce one of them. She is Mary Kenny, mother of two grown-up boys and one of Britain's wisest and wittiest

British Management Part 32.

SIR "CHIPS" CHIPPENDALE KESWICK, Director Bank of England, Persimmon plc, De Beers Ltd. Deputy Chairman Hambros plc since 1991. LORD KINGSDOWN (Robin Leigh Pemberton), former Governor Bank of England, former Chairman National Westminster Bank. Director Redland plc. Director Hambros plc since 1994.



commentators." Kenny is also said to be "authoritative", "warm", "perceptive" and "widely acclaimed", with "lively and controversial (and sometimes perverse) views about the way we are".

6 January: Yet more good news. After nine years as "Britain's top diarist", Ross Benson is returning to his previous role as "a brilliant and highly-acclaimed feature writer". He will be providing "wry asides" and "highly-opinionated views". Meanwhile, Chris Buckland is inaugurating a new political column, which "will burrow beneath the corridors of power... Read it today on Page 9 and you will realise that this is REALLY the column that politicians dread."

8 January: The William Hickey column is back after a long absence — "like the phoenix from the ashes, or Sherlock Holmes from the Rickenback [sic] Falls... It's part of a brilliant new package which is making the *Daily Express* the most talked-about newspaper in Britain."

9 January: "Two brilliant talents are joining the new *Daily Express*. Both will add to the weight and the zest of the most talked-about newspaper in Britain today. Belinda Harley takes over as literary editor when our distinguished present incumbent Peter Grosvenor retires in the spring. And Paul Henderson, one of Fleet Street's most formidable reporters, joins the *Express's* news team... The *Daily Express* is the paper that you cannot afford to be without."

15 January: "Your exciting *Daily Express* today adds yet another star to its expanding galaxy of talent... Today, in perhaps the most unexpected twist to a glittering career, Roy Hattersley joins the *Daily Express* as television critic. He brings a fresh and intelligent eye to the nation's premier entertainment medium. He will be the icing on the cake of our new-look, easier-to-read television pages... Altogether it's an unmissable package."

17 January: "Another top journalist joins the *Daily Express* today as support gathers among readers and commentators for the changes we have been making..." Today's new arrival is Philip Norman — "one of Britain's outstanding journalists", who has "won acclaim all over the world". In the *Express*, we learn, he will "apply his wit to all aspects of the world we live in".

No doubt Richard Addis hopes that this constant drum-banging will do wonders for his circulation. But he should beware: since most *Express* buyers are well over the age of 80, they may well keel over with a collective heart attack if they are subjected to any more excitement.

"We are looking for the best journalists from around the world. — Beth Comstock, NBC.

U.K. Press Gazette

DOING THE ROUNDS

A Doctor writes

DEAR MD, I am a house-officer at Wansbeck General Hospital, an institution that has featured several times in your column. Despite having been a doctor for only five months, I consider myself hardened, cynical and brutalised.

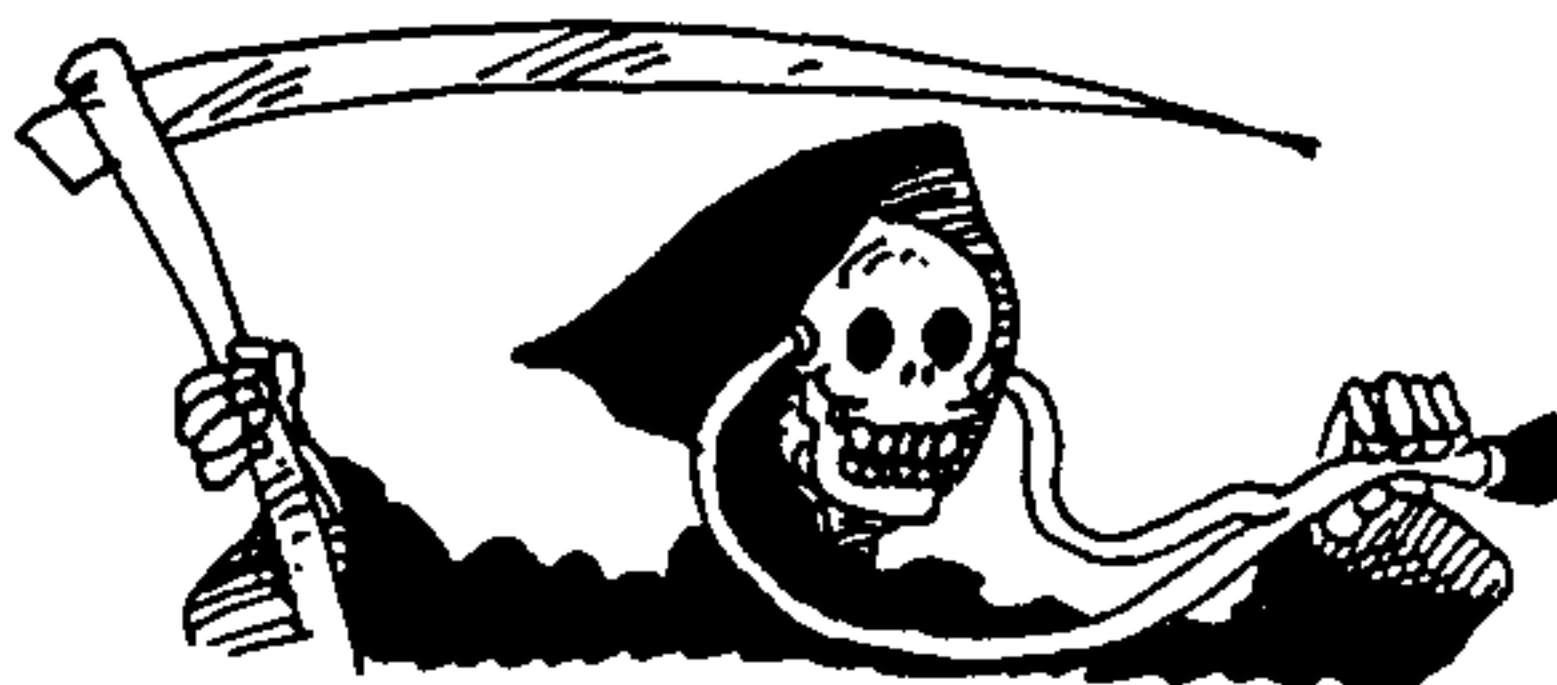
I have seen my interests and hobbies decimated and have lost touch with friends because of my job. In February I move to a trust in Sunderland, where my contract has been vetted and declared "totally unacceptable" by the BMA's industrial relations officer. In August I will join the hordes of junior doctors fleeing Britain to New Zealand, Australia and South Africa because I cannot envisage doing three to four more years of SHO jobs, working for these disgusting institutions.

At Wansbeck, a trust millions in debt, we admitted medical emergencies to surgical wards almost every day over Christmas and new year. This is distressing for the nurses, who are not used to this type of patient, and bad for patients themselves who can easily be forgotten.

On one weekday following new year, 18 of 21 emergency medical admissions between 1700 and 0900 went to surgical wards, and a ward had to be reopened to cope with demand. At the moment the plan is to cut the number of medical beds, despite year round bed-occupancy rates well over 90 percent. The only thing that has made the job bearable is the "in the trenches" camaraderie among junior doctors. If you use any of the above, please don't mention my name. As you know, medicine is a patronage system and seems very sinister from where I am.

● **HEALTH** secretary Stephen Dorrell persists with his ludicrous claim that there is no shortage of nurses, despite the recent death of Geoffrey Cranswick, among others.

There is not only a NHS-wide shortage of nurses, but a dire shortfall of specialist nurses. Hence **Bradford Royal Infirmary** could not open its fifth intensive care bed to take Mr Cranswick.



Neither could an ICU bed be staffed for him in Leeds, Sheffield, Halifax, Pontefract, Wakefield, Sheffield or Hull.

Accident and emergency departments throughout the country are currently short of nurses, doctors and space. Surrey's St Helier hospital has had to put up beds in the children's play areas and occupied trolleys have blocked off the fire exits. At one point, the London Ambulance Service refused to take patients there. The problem is compounded by the fact that 60 in-patients are ready to go home but can't be discharged because of the inadequacies of the community care programme.

London's Charing Cross hospital is another place to avoid if you like your body-space. As one nurse put it: "Last night, when I came off duty, 10 patients were preparing to spend the night in the department. There are closed wards standing empty but we are told there aren't the nurses to staff them. We use as many beds from the closed wards as we can to get the patients off trolleys and make them more comfortable, but there is very little space and we are running a ward within a casualty department. One poor man with leukaemia was left lying on a trolley and we were unable to give proper care. The lights are always on, there is only one toilet for the whole area and there is nowhere to put belongings. The stress on staff is incredible."

Nurses are also in short supply in nursing homes. At the 150-bed St Christopher nursing home, Hatfield, 82 residents have died in 10 months. These extreme levels of negative patient output were not helped by an inexperienced matron who went off sick shortly after the home opened, and the failure to attract high quality staff with a pay package even lower than NHS rates.

● **THE British Nursing Association** likes to extend as much freedom of choice to its clients as possible. So much so that it rang a patient in Sussex

to ask if she minded a home visit from a black nurse. The nurse in question, Beatrice McCarthy, has been a BNA employee for 20 years. On discovering from the patient that the call had been made, she felt "physically sickened" and has since lost all confidence in the job she loved. However, her case has been dismissed by a Southampton tribunal because the race relations act (1976) allows discrimination for employment in a private household.

BRILLIANT APPOINTMENTS

● **GOOD** news for teeth: the General Dental Council has appointed an "outstanding" new chief executive: Mrs Ros Hepplewhite. The press release announcing her arrival admits that the profession faces big changes but boasts that it will have a manager well-versed in "the media and with Parliament." And so it will: Mrs Hepplewhite's last job was implementing the 1991 child support act through the infamous Child Support Agency, and the GDC is no doubt referring to the various social security select committees that called upon Mrs H. to explain this massive balls-up.

● **FROM** April the new Leeds Health Authority will have former TV executive Clive Leach as part-time chairman. Mr Leach is unencumbered by health service experience — unless you count the production of *Jimmy's* — but knows a thing or two about money. He was sacked as chief executive of Yorkshire Tyne Tees Television after saddling it with a crippling £53 million annual franchise fee and then lost more money through the double-selling of airtime to advertisers (*Eye* 860). As chairman in Leeds he will have responsibility for an annual budget of £275 million.

APOLOGY

MD wishes to apologise for the incomprehensibility of the mid-section of the last *Doing the Rounds*. This was due to a typographical mis-juxtaposition of paragraphs. Sorry.

M.D.

DOWN ON THE FARM

NOT least of the latest Mafia cock-ups is the delay in payments to farmers of EU subsidy cheques under the notorious Integrated Administration and Control System (IACS). More than 17 per cent of farmers have still not been paid, against a "citizen's charter" deadline of 31 December.

While few tears will be shed at the thought of a few farmers being robbed of their ill-gotten gains, the taxpayer, who is to pick up the tab, has good cause to cry. So arcane are the rules that the UK is to be fined by the EU for the delay — 10 per cent of the value of outstanding payments.

The first 4 per cent of late payments is disregarded for this purpose, which leaves £140 million outstanding. Thus taxpayers must find £14 million. Small wonder even Mafia officials call IACS the "Inefficiently Administered Cock-up System".

Old Macdonald

THE BRAINS AND THE SPINAL COLUMNS HAVE BEEN REMOVED MR HIGGINS!



NOW ARE YOU SURE TOMMY?

ABSOLUTELY!



THAT'S WHY THE BASTARDS NEVER PUT A DECENT CASE FOR THE BRITISH MEAT INDUSTRY!



As if this were not enough, the Mafia has also cocked-up the administration of set-aside, the ingenious scheme whereby farmers are paid for not growing food crops (*Eyes passim*). What benefit there was from the scheme arose from the long term set-aside where farmers left the same land fallow for five years.

Here, the environmental gain has been enough to convince some of the more enlightened farmers to keep their land fallow, relying on guarantees from farming minister Douglas "Piggy" Hogg that they would be able to do so when the first five-year period ends this year. But, at the eleventh hour, it appears his officials have misread the rules. The land is no longer eligible for subsidy and will have to be put back into production.

At least heads are to roll in the IACS department, where Dudley "Over" Coates was given the push in the recent massacre of senior Mafia posts (*Eye* 888). But set-aside supremo George Trevelyan has found the perfect place to hide from the falling axe: he is now chief executive of the intervention board, the Mafia agency which stops farmers producing milk, where he will no doubt continue to exercise his undoubted talents.

ALBERT



WHILE the beef industry recovers from the Mafia's maladroitness handling of the Christmas BSE scare, and beef sales — if not prices — return to normal, many farmers and butchers have paid dearly for the Mafia's lamentable handling of the issue.

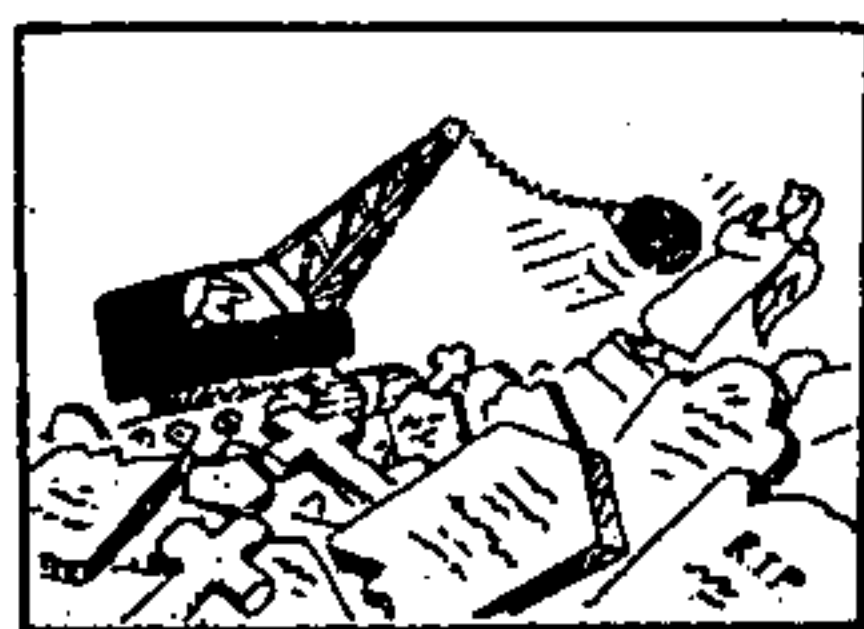
One victim was Mark Purdey, the Taunton organic dairy farmer who has been challenging the Mafia claim that the disease has been caused by infected feed containing Scrapie-infected sheep's brains. The irony is that last November, before the scare took hold, Purdey was paid more than £200 for one of his barren organic cows in the local market. A month later, with the BSE scare taking hold and prices collapsing, he was paid a mere £95 for a similar BSE-free cow. Not one to take a loss lying down, Purdey has invoiced the Mafia for the difference.

His theory that BSE was caused by organophosphorous compounds (OPs) has of course been firmly rejected by a Mafia which, as everyone knows, is never wrong about anything. Nevertheless Purdey is now even more convinced that he is right, especially as he has now discovered that the OP used to treat dairy cattle contained a thalidomide chemical similar to that which caused the deformities in thousands of unborn children in the 1960s.

This may be one reason the Mafia is so coy about publicising anything to do with these nerve-gas based chemicals.

The latest example of its coyness is its treatment of the government response to the agriculture committee report on the Veterinary Medicines Directorate, which administered the licensing of OPs on behalf of the Mafia. Not only was the response delayed, but when it finally emerged nearly two months late no advance copy was available. Hacks were told to buy their own from HMSO on the day of publication at an extortionate £3.40 for an 11-page booklet.

'New Muckspreader'



Rotten Borough Advertiser



STRAIGHT TO THE CHANTRY POINT...

DID Westminster know that the Chantry Point tower block on the Elgin Estate in Maida Vale was riddled with asbestos when it moved hundreds of homeless families in at the end of the 1980s?

Council leaders say they were unaware of Elgin's problems and that the decision was not spiteful but was made on practical grounds. Odd, then, the advert in the *London Evening Standard* of 28 April 1986 that invited tenders to the City of Westminster for "asbestos removal and encapsulation... within this 20-storey steel-framed tower block... at Chantry Point, Elgin Estate, London W9".

While council chief executive Bill Roots receives large lumps of asbestos in the post, Tory councillors have other worries. If the authority is found liable for former residents' contracting an asbestos-related disease over the next few decades, the pay out could be as high as a tower block.

● The good news, meanwhile, is that plans to stick the homeless in aircraft hangars in Essex or on boats on the Thames have been shelved.

The bad news is that the council is paying £750,000 a year to keep 150 refugee families in Clarendon Court "Hotel", a cockroach-infested hell-hole on the Edgware Road in Maida Vale, which two independent environmental health consultants have condemned as unfit for human habitation.

There are only 12 cookers for more than 350 people; families are forced to sleep five and six to a bed; toddlers are able to get on to the roof seven storeys high; bed sheets are changed just once a month; and the block is home to two species of cockroach. Inmates — sorry, residents — who dare complain have had their water turned off by the hotel managers and those who spoke to journalists about conditions have had their TVs confiscated.

Snotty Maida Vale residents have complained about Clarendon Court — not because of the appalling conditions but because it might affect property prices. Westminster, considerate as ever, has declared the place "a statutory nuisance", but why has it not declared Clarendon Court unfit for human habitation? Surely not because town hall officers are currently negotiating with the shadowy Malaysia-based owners to turn it into yuppie flats?

● The district auditor's report on the "homes for votes" scandal is out soon and it will name the guilty parties. The DA will then apply to the high court to seize the assets of those councillors who face surcharge. This is to repay losses that were thought to be £21.25 million but have now risen to £30 million after houses were sold cheaply in marginal wards and potential buyers were allowed free repairs.

IN BRIEF

WANDSWORTH: The fraud squad is investigating private street-cleaning firm Onyx UK Ltd, after council auditors found evidence Onyx was "guilty of abusing its contract". Onyx staff collected private and trade refuse when they should have been concentrating on cleaning the borough's streets. Onyx workers also used council vehicles and premises to collect trade refuse before using the free rubbish dump service offered by the Western Riverside Waste Authority. To get round the fact that it did not have permission to use the dump for private work, Onyx mixed the rubbish with street-cleaning refuse. The auditors said the firm could have saved as much as £100,000 by doing the private work and using the free dump (which it was not entitled to do). So in the interests of open government, both public and press were barred when councillors recently heard details of the scam. Onyx has sent the council £3,000 to make good the wrong, and the Tory council has decided nothing untoward happened and Onyx can keep its contract. Will the fraud squad agree?

HACKNEYED MESSAGE

BELEAGUERED Hackney has learnt nothing from its *annus horribilis* in 1995 — a year dogged by recruitment fraud, the Bernard Crofton fiasco, the forced closure of Hackney Downs school and a town hall coup that replaced one dodgy Labour regime with another (see *Eyes passim ad nauseam*).

The problem, say council leaders in best Majorspeak, is neither political incompetence nor corruption. It is simply that councillors are having trouble getting their message across. Hence all the time and effort Hackney is spending to find a £300-a-day spin doctor who can present the borough as a municipal paradise.

Last autumn it appointed Neil Martinson, a PR consultant who also happened to be a local Labour party official, on a £17,000 salary for a three-day week. He found a catalogue of horrors, not least that the press office, rather than backing the current leadership, right or wrong, was a hotbed of support for the disgraced and ousted regime of John McCafferty. That regime was largely responsible for Hackney's current mess — 100 council employees still

being paid a total of £2 million to do nothing in "no redundancies" Hackney — and is now planning a coup to regain control.

Martinson's report to chief executive Tony Elliston rubbished the press office on grounds of incompetence and said it had been sending out libellous press releases. The press office hit back and successfully lobbied councillors to sack Martinson after only a few weeks in office. He will be replaced by someone on a similarly inflated salary, and there will be a new assistant chief executive (public relations and communications) on £65,000 a year. Of course the whole show could grind to a halt if Labour decides nationally to suspend Hackney Labour group (à la Walsall) following its lengthy investigation.

Meanwhile the real business of loony left local government continues: woman's officer Algin Saydar has invited 130 lesbians to ask the council to provide services for them. The social services department was asked "that specific services for lesbians with mental health difficulties be developed"; environmental services were asked to provide "more access to opportunities for lesbians setting up their own small businesses"; while general comments included demands for "more provision for older lesbians" and "more visual images and symbols of lesbians around the borough".

GREGORY'S GIRL

TORIES on Portsmouth city council have found just the man to mastermind the changeover of council services to a unitary authority: Terry Gregory.

His credentials as leader of the four-man think-tank include his previous position as a respected member of the Tory council in the 1980s when he held the post of housing chairman — and not forgetting his investigation by the council in 1988 over alleged housing and planning irregularities.

One of the rehousing cases investigated by the council involved an 80-year-old widow who accepted the housing committee's offer of a warden-assisted flat in a tower block. Gregory kindly stepped in as middle-man to sell the old lady's property in a deal which saw Tory deputy leader Charles Mos buying it. At the time Gregory was employed by a Southsea estate agent.

Gregory was thrown out of the Tory group and a year later was given a two-year suspended sentence after he faced five charges of dishonesty on another matter — fiddling a £1,000 expenses claim for a trip to India. Gregory will be a boon helping the Portsmouth Tories decide their policies for the new year.

HULL: Labour councillor and ex-mayor Dennis Woods has pleaded guilty before Lincoln magistrates to fiddling his expenses. He claimed he had attended meetings of Torch Telecom, a joint venture involving the local council-owned telephone company (which he chairs) and Yorkshire Electricity, and took £500 in attendance allowances. The only problem was he didn't attend the meetings. Woods doesn't feel he has erred enough to warrant leaving the council; but if he receives a custodial sentence, which magistrates have warned is likely, he will have to quit.

ROCHDALE: Some locals are angry at Nynex, the telecommunications firm, which is tearing up cobblestones to install cable TV. Complaints have been so numerous the council's ruling Tory-Liberal coalition decided to seek a contribution from the private sector to fund a "pavement inspector". Adverts were placed, tenders sought and a company came forward with a large donation to monitor Nynex's work... er, Nynex. Even worse, Rochdale has taken the money.



IN THE LIBRARY

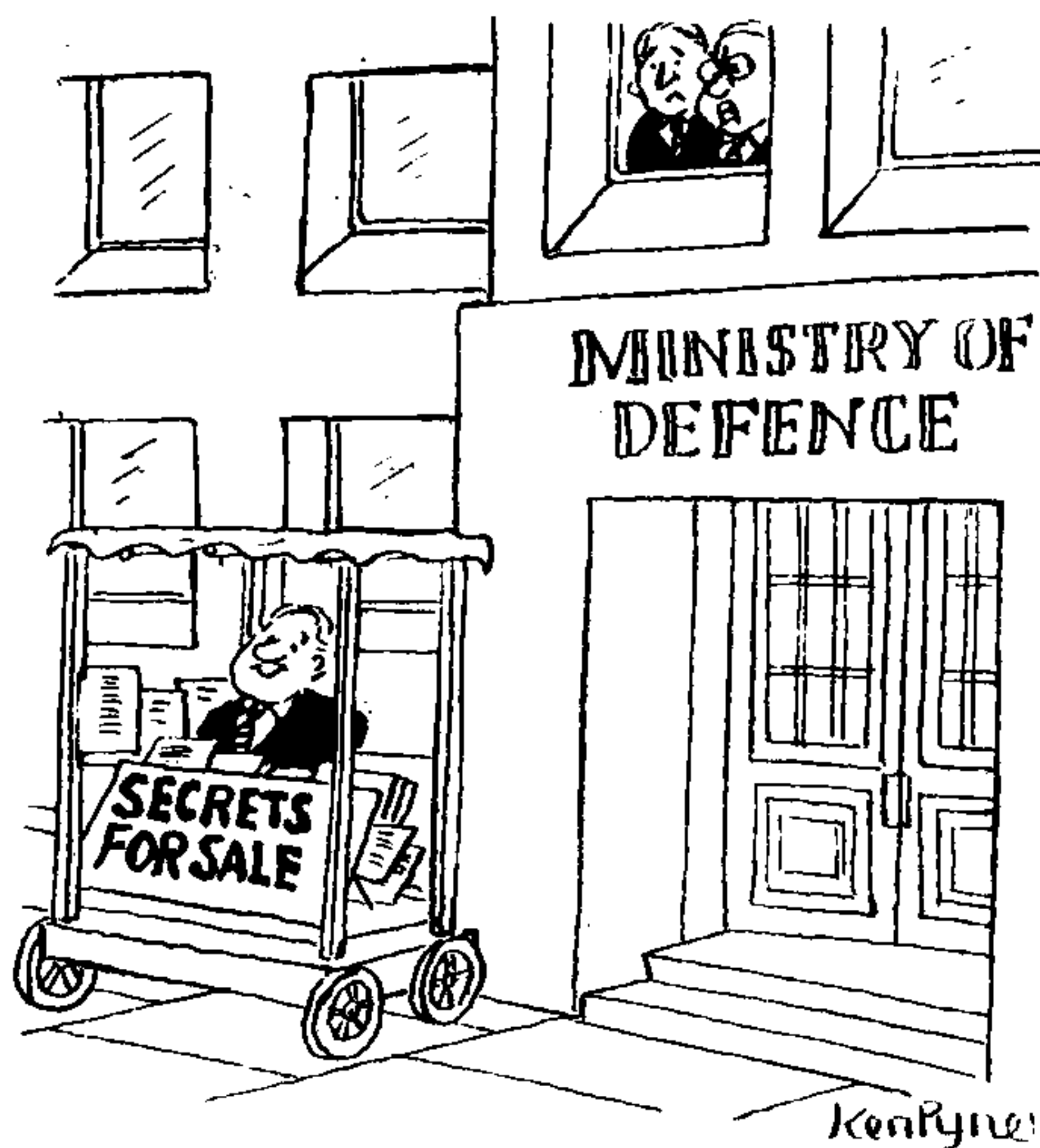
WHEN librarians and locals occupied Sheffield's Hemsworth library to stop the council closing it, the courts ordered them out citing the criminal justice act — and they tearfully vacated the building.

This threw the council's legal department into disarray, however: it had planned to seek repossession the following morning and the entire legal department, bar one office junior, had gone out to an office party. Deputy director of libraries Dave Spencer was left to face loud insults as he changed the library locks himself.

The closure has done nothing for Labour's popularity, and the man least looking forward to elections in May is Coun Mike Pye, chair of the libraries committee. It was he who turned down the protesters' offer of funding the library for the next 12 months.



HUSBAND



SIGNAL FAILURES

A RAILTRACK memo to signalling staff proves how privatisation has failed to make the railways more responsive to customers' needs, as was promised by the government in 1993.

In the days of "unresponsive" British Rail, a locomotive could be sent out at short notice if there was extra freight to be moved. Today every train movement has to be planned in advance and the various fees agreed. Even moving an individual or "light" engine around is affected.

"Where a light engine movement slips into the system unnoticed this can result in charges being lost by Railtrack," says the memo. "Should a light engine movement appear and the description is not known then the engine should be stopped, details obtained from the driver as to where it has come from, where it is going to along with the engine number. Control must be contacted and given this information before the movement is allowed to proceed."

The upshot of this hideous bureaucracy is that freight dispatch not planned well in advance cannot go by rail. The alternative is to send goods by road where there are no access charges, agreements, working timetables or officious managers to stand in the way. This government-imposed incentive to use road freight contradicts another stated policy — to switch freight from road to rail.

THE folly of privatising Railtrack will be obvious to local authorities up and down the country who are being held to ransom by the tight-fisted track authority.

The cost of projects has rocketed since Railtrack took over from BR — and before it has shareholders to please. For example, the Jewellery Line in Birmingham opened last year and would have cost £22.5 million under BR. Railtrack upped the price and the final cost was £28.5 million, towards which Railtrack paid only £5 million.

Local authorities will soon help line Railtrack shareholders' pockets because Railtrack is forcing them to pay for measures which will improve Railtrack's own efficiency. Councils are paying millions for new lines and stations and replacement of outdated signals, while Railtrack often pays next to nothing. Such investments result in much greater revenue (for Railtrack) from track access charges, lower maintenance costs (for Railtrack) and lower operating costs (for Railtrack) as fewer signal staff will be needed.

This is perhaps acceptable where a nationalised Railtrack or BR is concerned because the money largely comes from state coffers and benefits accrue to the state. When Railtrack is privatised the benefits will accrue to shareholders, but local authorities will still have to pay Railtrack's modernisation costs if they want to tackle road congestion and give their areas better economic chances.

BT and other privatised utilities would not get away with arm-twisting like this because their profits pay for upgrading. Railtrack, by contrast, is inherently unprofitable and will depend on perks like this — not forgetting subsidised train operators paying inflated track access charges, the sale of lucrative property sites or its monopoly staying in place after flotation.

'Dr B Ching'

Letters

Private Eye

Stamp corrected

Sir,

I don't know if you pay Piloti but, if you do, I suggest you dock his pocket money for recycling (in EYE 885) a piece by Gavin Stamp from 10 years ago in which he mocks the Casson Conder Partnership, as winners of the Derby Civic Halls competition, for not finding a use for the façade of the 18th century Assembly Rooms.

Stamp was corrected then, so it cannot be him writing now for, as far as I know, he does not tell deliberate lies. His technique is to abstain from the tiniest bit of research when wishing to attack — lest a revealed truth should invalidate his intended fabrication.

Having said that, I should in fairness add that he recently reviewed the Casson Conder design for the new office block flanking Charing Cross forecourt. The criticism was, as you would expect, severe; fair enough — but, remarkably, there was not one mis-statement of fact!

Well done, Gavin!

Yours,
NEVILLE CONDER,

London SW7.

Pulling rank

Sir,

Well, Neville Conder does have a long memory; the rank injustice of an aside in a book review I wrote in BUILDING DESIGN has clearly been festering in his mind for a decade. My error then was not to observe that, in the Casson Conder winning scheme for Derby Civic Centre, the facade of the poor old Assembly Rooms was to be "re-erected on the axis of the eastern approach road". Mea culpa — except that, for some of us, such a gratuitous gesture is almost as bad as total demolition as we believe that historic buildings — even when damaged — deserve restoration in situ. Besides, I find it difficult to respect visionary schemes that demonstrate so little respect for the grain and monuments of old towns. Anyway, the real proof of the pudding is that the visitor to Derby today, while being uplifted by the new Casson Conder Civic Centre (which, because "both bland in colour and rather featureless, fails to give the Market Place, as the centre of the town, any sense of visual climax," as the BUILDINGS OF ENGLAND volume on Derbyshire puts it), will not find the Assembly Rooms facade anywhere at all: it was eventually rescued and reerected at Crich Tramway Museum. So what point is Mr Conder really trying to make?

Yours,
GAVIN STAMP,

Glasgow.

What a pain!

Sir,

Regarding your article focusing on Paula Yates.

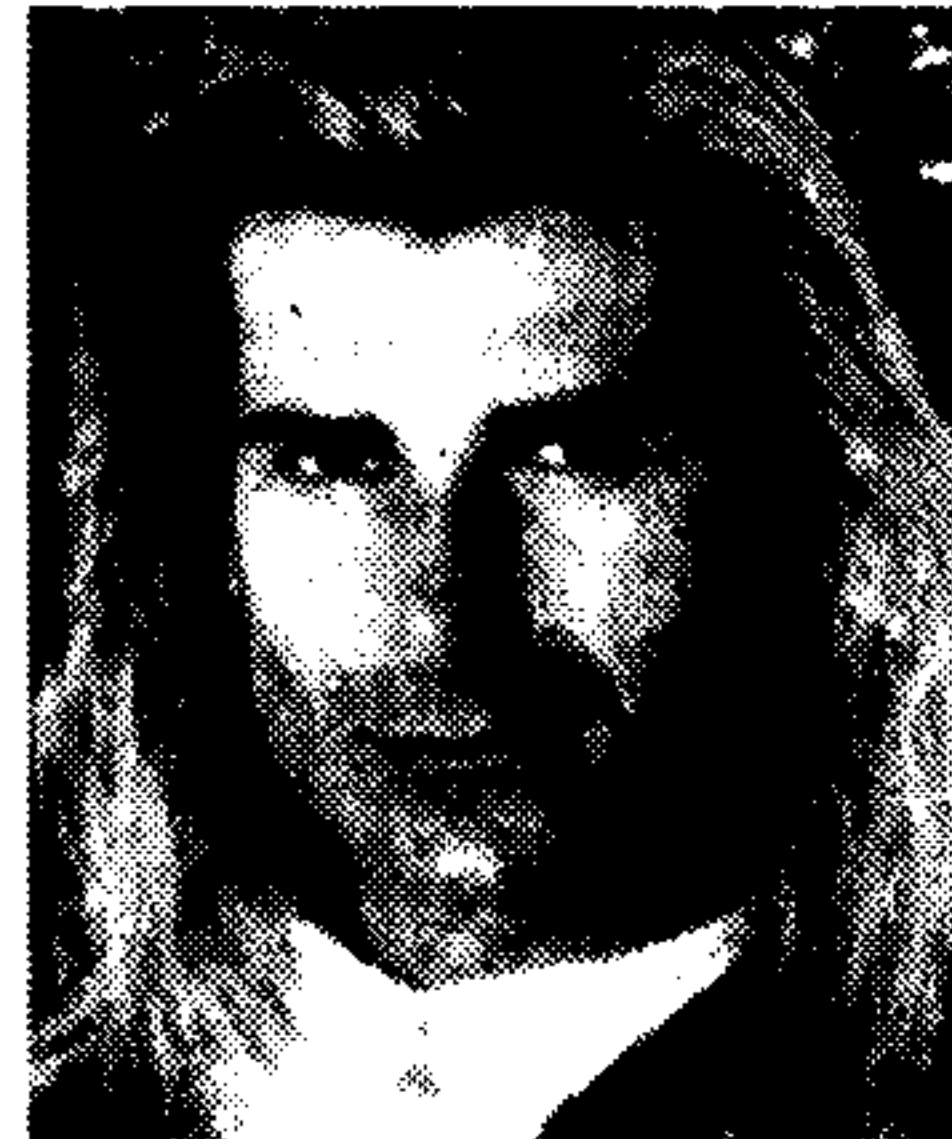
I am afraid that Ms Yates is correct in stating that Abergele Hospital catered for patients with orthopaedic conditions as well as chest complaints. I was a charge nurse at that hospital from about 1963 to about 1969 and can confirm that I looked after patients in both these categories.

I can further confirm that a treatment for lung conditions, and commonly employed, consists of postural drainage. This would, indeed, involve angling the patient in the manner described by Yates, albeit not as dramatically as depicted!

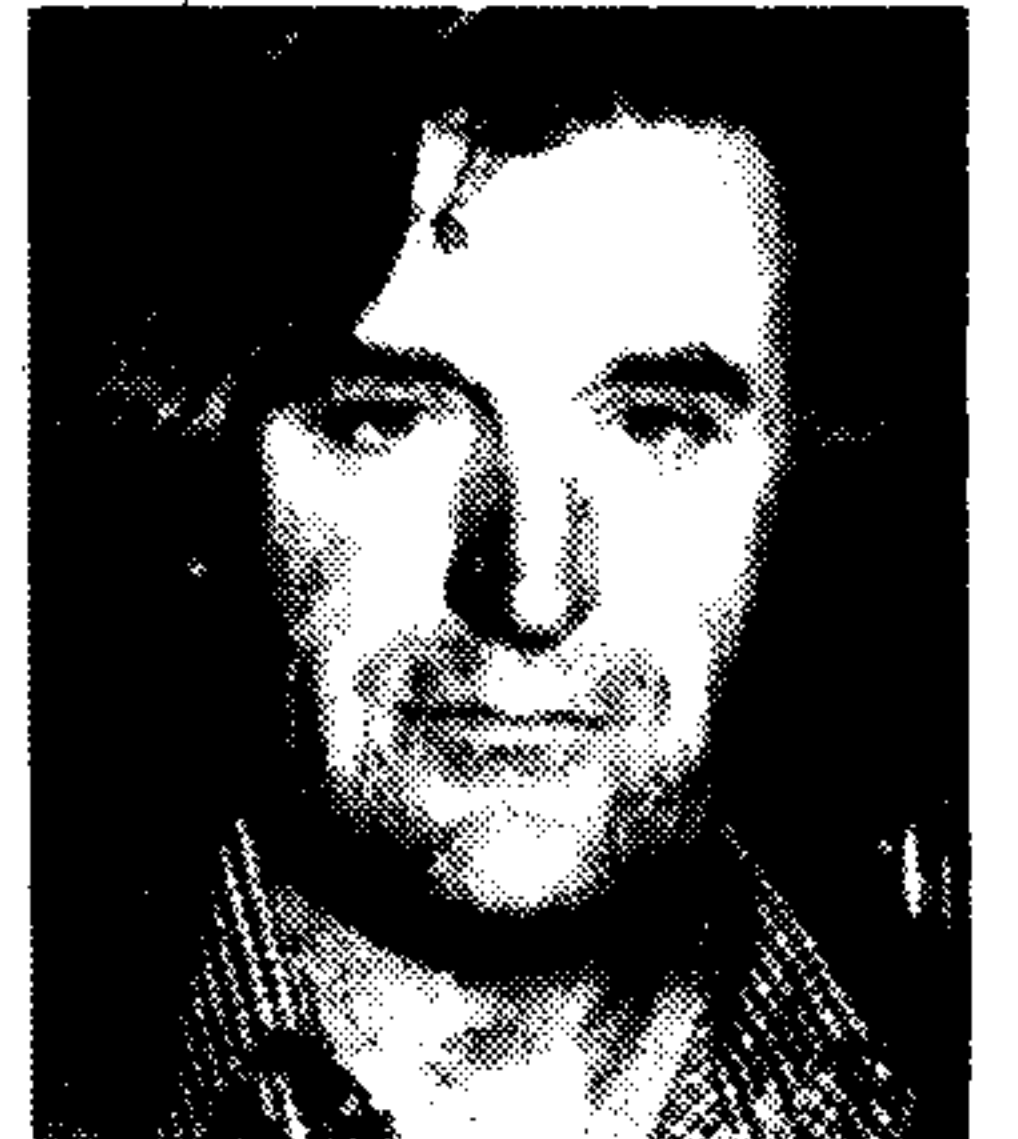
Yours faithfully,
J. RIMMER,

Warrington, Cheshire.

Lookalike



Hughes



Fabio

Sir,

Surely I am not the only one to note the remarkable resemblance between Hollywood model Fabio and our own romantic icon, Poet Laureate Ted Hughes?

Yours faithfully,
GILLIAN FIGG (MRS),

Swansea.

False assumption

Sir,

With reference to the otherwise faultless account by J.H. Higgs (EYE 888) of the death of St Maximilian Kolbe I should like to correct one arithmetical error. Fr Kolbe died (or rather, was killed by lethal injection) on the eve of the Assumption, some 16 days (not 18) after his voluntary incarceration.

Yours faithfully,
MARK WATSON,

London SW19.

Brief lives

Sir,

I write with regard to your article on the case of Councillor Dennis Woods (Rotten Boroughs, 12 Jan).

For the record, the facts are that as soon as irregularities came to light the matter was referred to the Humberside police fraud squad. Once a decision was taken to prosecute, the Labour party at Walworth Road was informed.

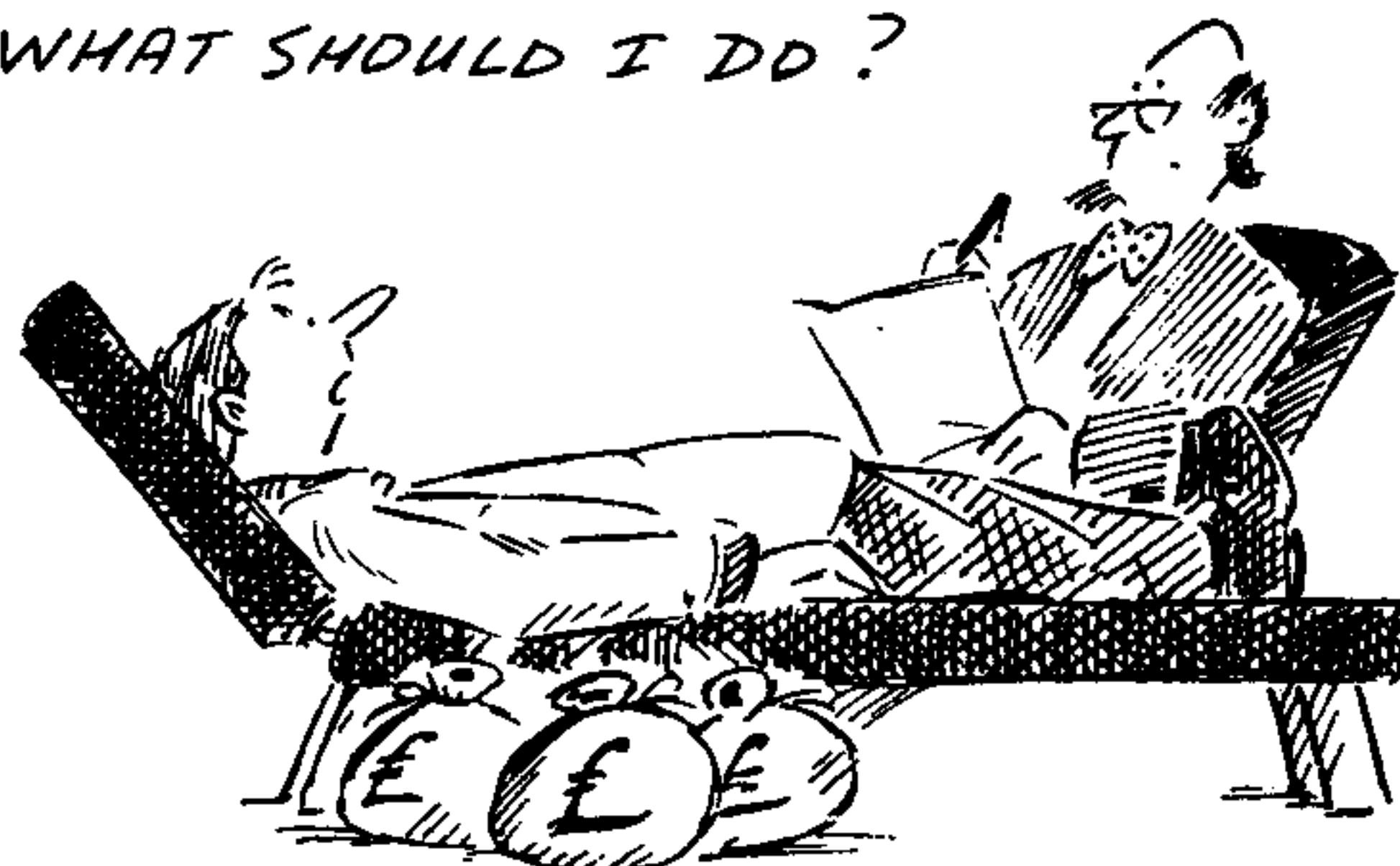
Yours faithfully,
COUN P.J. DOYLE,

Leader, Hull City Council.

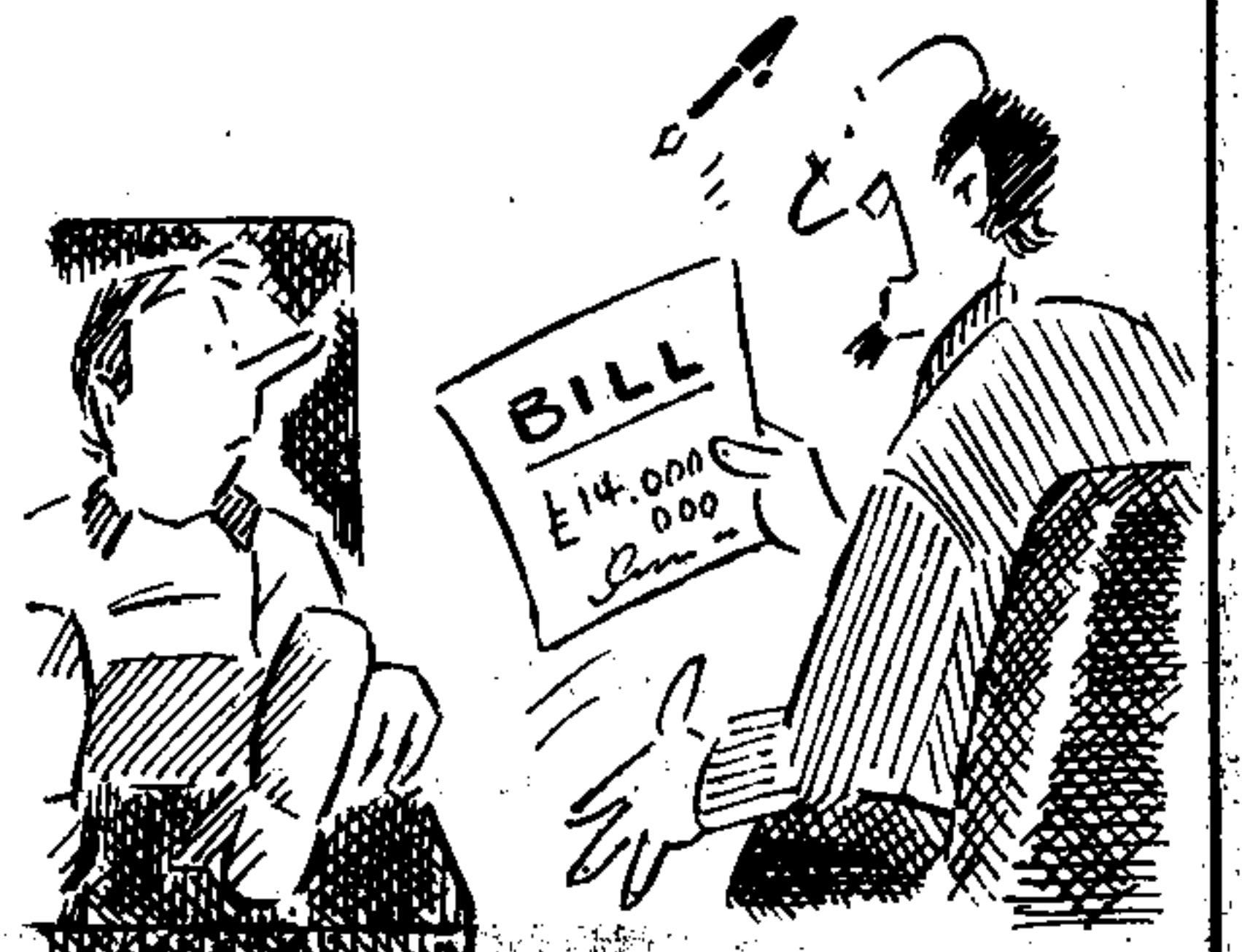
The Lottery Winners

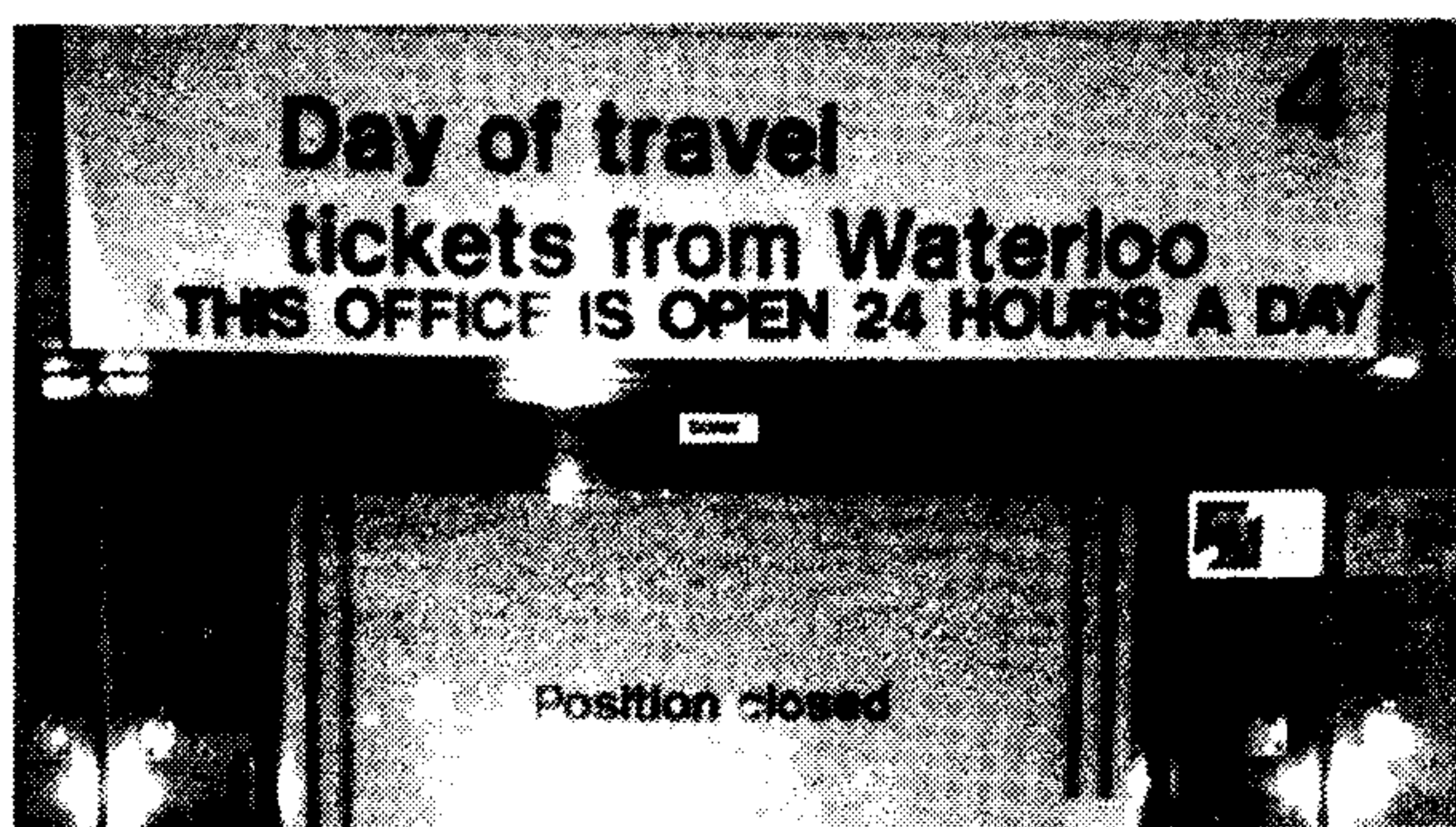
TURNER

I NEVER REALISED WINNING
£14 MILLION WOULD BRING
SO MANY PROBLEMS.
WHAT SHOULD I DO?



GIVE IT TO ME!





I-SPY

Submitted by Hugo James. £10 paid for similar submissions. (SAE required for return of photographs. No transparencies.)

Water pressure

Sir,

Water companies should get their service to customers right first time so they have no cause for complaint (EYE, 29 Dec).

Oswat does not have a monopoly in handling complaints from dissatisfied customers and we don't mind a bit of competition from other groups if the result is that the problem is put right. We have good relations with Citizens Advice Bureaux; indeed some CAB people are members of our regional Customer Service Committees.

Complaint handling is only one part of the water watchdog role of our committees. Last year they received over 13,000 complaints and over 36,000 inquiries from customers. Oswat expects water companies to act commercially and compensate customers for poor service. In the last four years our committees have obtained £3.25 million in compensation and savings for customers in cases where the companies have not paid up voluntarily.

If these figures seem "relatively low" to anyone they are a sign of our success. The water companies have the primary responsibility for answering complaints and enquiries from their customers and, under pressure from Oswat, they are getting better at doing so without the need for our committees or anyone else to intervene.

My apologies for inconveniencing you with the facts; but you were right (EYE 25 August) that the Oswat director-general's private secretary is my wife — and she has been for five years.

Yours faithfully,
ROY WARDLE,

Secretary to Oswat National Customer Council.

Rollmeover in the cloister

Sir,

Have any of your readers spotted any similarity between the Church of England, as represented by the Bishops of Wakefield, Worcester et al, (lottery, obscene, greed blah blah etc), and the Church of England which gambled and lost £800 million of its own assets as a result of some rather unfortunate property speculation? I wonder, is there a possibility that these two may in some way be connected.

Yours, recovering from acute
double-rollover lottery fever,
S. CLUTTON,

Chatham, Kent.



Why is it that this astonishing woman, who speaks so splendidly, who leads so clearly, who grasps so firmly what the principles of Conservative government are about — why is she addressing us as a retired, elder stateswoman and not as our actual Prime Minister? Why were we such fools as to let her go?

PAUL JOHNSON
Daily Mail

Submitted by P.G. Mann.

£10 paid for all entries put forward for the
Order of the Brown Nose.

Spaced out

Sir,

While the EYE's literary reviewer may have some valid points to make on the not-so-alternative marketing of the X FILES, the tendency to fall into the mode of your own beloved "string-em-up" cabbies grows evermore alarming.

We read of the "dorks", "bores" and "twerps" who rather enjoy the likes of DR WHO and THE PRISONER for example. Sorry, did you mean "television science fiction fans"? Then we are treated to "garbage" with reference to the paranormal, "tosh" with regard to the occult and then hear about "flakes" such as UFO researchers.

I had not realised that interest in any of the above was so abhorrent to the common person! I will of course flagellate myself accordingly and will remember as I do so that next time I watch any fantasy-based television or find myself considering that there might be anything more to this universe than meets the eye, that I am, of course, deluding myself.

Oh, and I shall remember too that the EYE seems to be getting increasingly intolerant in its old age of the so-called "alternative" views held by millions.

All the best,
ANDY THOMAS,

Lewes, East Sussex.

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

"Under that heart of stone beat muscles of pure flint."

SID WADDELL, Sky Sports
(Matthew Geare)

"The new West Stand casts a giant shadow over the entire pitch, even on a sunny day."

CHRIS JONES, Evening Standard
(R.G. Hart)

"What will you do when you leave football, Jack — will you stay in football?"

STUART HALL, Radio 5 Live
(David Carpenter)

Jeremy Vine: So your autobiography is out in paperback. What's it about?

Lord Longford: Myself...

Radio 5 Live
(Derek Agnew)

Postcard from The Gulf

THE latest beneficiary of the amazing largesse of the London-based Gulf Centre for Strategic Studies is Douglas Hurd, the former foreign secretary.

Hurd went out to Bahrain at the new year to deliver a lecture for the GCSS on the importance of continuing good British relations with the Gulf states. The lecture did not dwell on the ticklish subject of parliamentary democracy, which Hurd supports but which has been banned in Bahrain since 1975.

Hurd said how pleased he was that the turmoil that has shaken the island for the past few months appeared to have died down. Within days of his speech, however, the government search-squads were out again hunting down and arresting anyone who had anything unpleasant to say in public or private about the island's amir, with whom, naturally, Hurd had a personal audience.

Whether Hurd got the standard Rolex watch, a cupboard of which the Amir keeps handy for important guests and any visiting white woman he fancies, is not yet known. But Eye readers will recall that the last time MPs went to Bahrain they all got Rolex watches. Their leader then was William Powell, the Tory MP for Corby. He declared the gift in the MPs' register, but has never declared the regular cheques he receives from the Gulf Centre for Strategic Studies, whose general secretary, Omar El-Hassan, he employs as his researcher in the Commons.

PS: Within days of Hurd's visit the Amir's foreign secretary was in London for a meeting with foreign office minister Jeremy Hanley. Hanley was congratulated on the government's decision to deport Mohammed Al Mas'ari, the Saudi dissident, to Dominica — and suggested the FO might like to do the same with Sheikh Ali Salman, a Bahraini dissident seeking asylum in London.



Postcard from
Hong Kong

TWO Tory MPs, Terry Dicks (Hayes & Harlington) and Sir Keith Speed (Ashford), have been busy defending the freedom of the press in Hong Kong.

On a recent visit to the colony they publicly deplored moves to control the prices of newspapers there. These moves followed an astonishing cut in the cover price of the Chinese-language *Oriental Daily News* by its owners, the Oriental Press Group, from five dollars to two.

The cut was so severe that several other Hong Kong publications stopped publishing, among them *TV Daily News*, *Express News*, *Hong Kong United Daily News*, *The Huanan Jingi Journal* and *Leisure Times*. The two MPs, who were photographed in the Oriental Press offices, denounced any control of price-cutting as an insult to "the philosophy of Hong Kong's free market economy".

Mr Dicks added: "The last thing you want is politicians interfering in the market place." That is not the same thing at all as the market place interfering in politicians. In the MPs' register of interests, Mr Dicks declares that he is a "consultant to Oriental Press Group Ltd".

HOM SAP

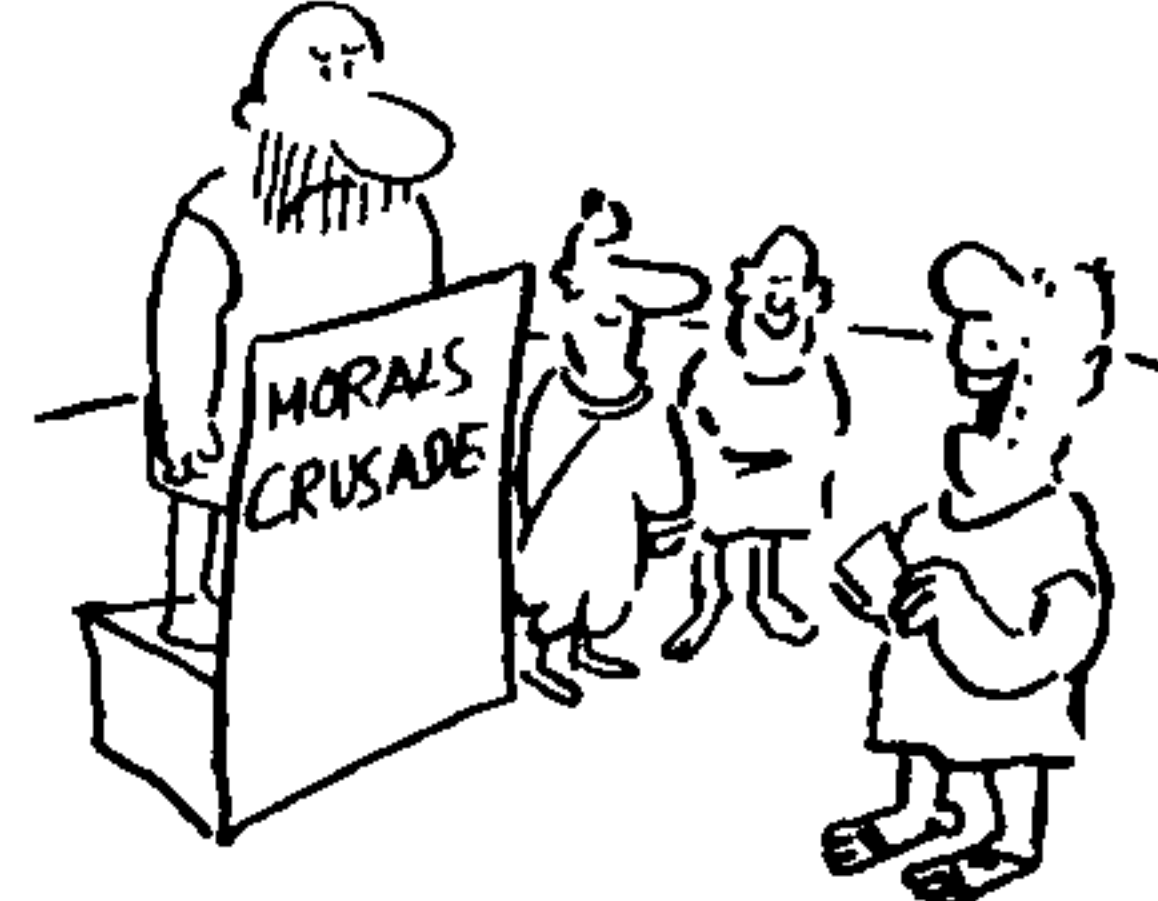


AUSTIN

BUT FOR MY FATHER'S TEACHING
I'D BE A VIOLENT CRIMINAL.

HALLELUJAH! AND WHAT
DID HE TEACH YOU?

THE THREE CARD TRICK.



● "I am ashamed that the brain fight happened at all," Ayako Hanyu told reporters, minutes after being expelled from the medical school at Kashima University. "I offered to clear up the mess. I blame the influence of diabolical western heavy metal music."

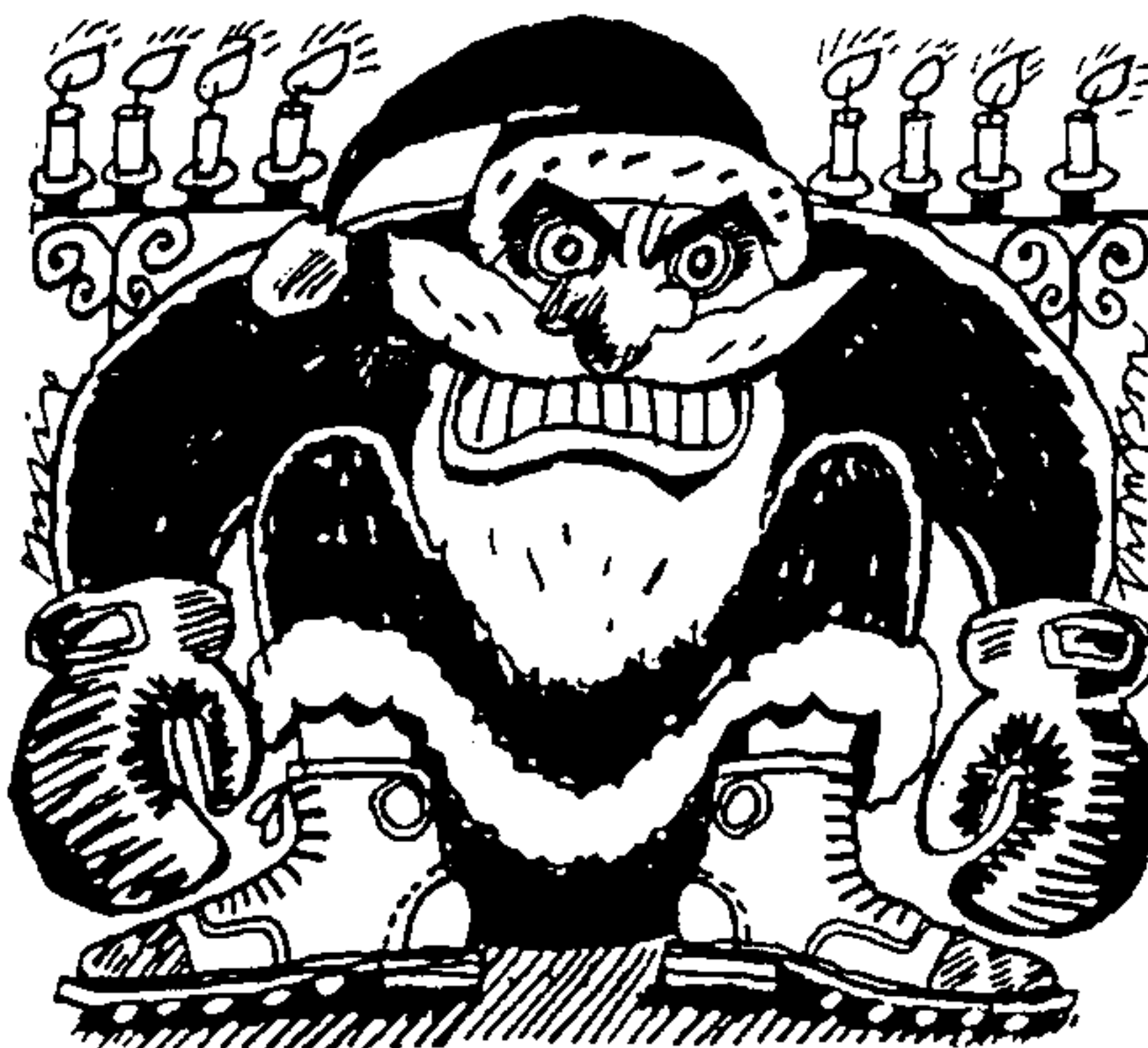
Speaking about the incident, Dean Shiuro Tatsuno explained why the university was expelling Hanyu and three other students: "About thirty students were dissecting human cadavers in the science laboratory when one of them decided to remove part of the cerebral cortex from a corpse's skull, shouted 'you're a bit short of this stuff yourself' and threw it at a female colleague, Kwo, with whom, I understand, she shared the same boyfriend. Kwo responded in a similar way and, within minutes, a full-scale brain fight had broken out. Soon, other students had opened the windows of the second-floor lab, and were hurling brains down at passers-by on the street below, as though they were footballs. Several people were splattered with the brains, and one girl was hit in the face and needed emergency treatment. A passing dog went berserk and ate everything thrown at him. By the time it was over, all of the corpses had had their brains scooped out, and the walls of the laboratory looked like an abattoir. Firm action was needed. These are future doctors and nurses who will work, eventually, in New York and London. We want them to conduct themselves like ladies and gentlemen at all times." (Reuter, 29/12/95. Spotter — David Krassner)

● "To my mind, it's disgusting. This is the third year in a row it's happened," John Holmes told ambulancemen as they carried him on a stretcher out of Bourke Central Park, New South Wales bleeding profusely and with fractures to both arms. "To my mind, kids today are completely losing sight of the true meaning of Christmas."

Speaking later from his hospital bed, Holmes explained what had happened earlier

FUNNY OLD WORLD

that evening: "For almost thirty years now, I've been dressing up as Santa Claus, as part of the Carols By Candlelight service in the park. I wear a red robe and a long white beard, and I drive across the park on a motorised sleigh, waving to the children and



giving out sweets. To my mind, it used to be a magical event until two years ago, when a group of kids started pelting me with stones and bottles and shouting out filth. Last year,

COMPILED BY

Victor Lewis-Smith

to my mind, was worse, because not only did they throw things, they also urinated into the petrol tank on my sleigh, so I couldn't drive away. To my mind it's wrong that I had to call a garage truck to tow me away. It spoiled the whole effect.

"But that was nothing compared to tonight. As soon as I got there, about a dozen kids, aged between eight and ten, dragged me by my beard out of my sleigh, and began kicking me in the groin, punching me in the kidneys, grabbing my sack of sweets, and trying to remove my disguise. I tried to run away, but they caught me and dragged me to the bank of the Darling river, where they partially disrobed me, broke both my arms, pissed all over me and then threw me in. Other children were crying and shouting 'don't let them hurt Santa', but their parents just stood and watched, and nobody came to help me and, to my mind, that's not on."

"To my mind, if I find out who they were, I'll kick their heads in, 10 years old or not, whatever the police say." (The Canberra Times, 20/12/55. Spotter — Andrew Doyle)

— ○ —

● "Dear Sir, This year is the five-year anniversary of the death of my friend, gay playwright Robert Chesley. I and another of Robert's good friends would like to get together with other people who knew and loved him to schmooze, celebrate, and listen to some sexual readings — things that Robert would have appreciated."

"If you knew Robert, had sex with Robert, acted in one of his plays, jerked off in the Y steam room with Robert, attended one of his velching parties or was just on the receiving end of his famous verbal abuse, please come and join us on Thursday December 21, at 7:30. We have slides taken of him in a Bangkok club which are touching and erotic. And probably illegal. Mark J. Chester. San Francisco." (San Francisco Bay Guardian, 20/12/95. Spotter — Mark Dunning)

66 CHESTER SQUARE LONDON SW1

Dear Bill,

Belated thanks for the book about marital problems for the over-eighties. I tried doing the pelvic exercise on page 10 and had to go to Dr O'Gooley for an appliance. I think I may have strapped it on the wrong way round as it is extremely painful.

Did you see M. giving her Mad Monk Memorial Lecture on the TV? Maurice rang me from the home to ask whether I'd like to book her in as there was a vacancy.

It all started with Dr Mulvany, McWhinnie? anyway that ghastly Ulsterman at Central Office, ringing us at Chester Square in advance to ask if they could have a transcript for their files. He was sure the old girl would not say anything controversial with an election looming and the Party trailing slightly in the polls. I could see a mad excited gleam come into the Boss's eye as she took the call, and she immediately refilled her glass while reassuring him that she would give her full support to her successor and promising to fax off something immediately. "Poor man," she crowed, draining the amber snort and winding a page from the telephone directory West London Residential A-C through the fax machine, "If only he knew who I meant by 'my successor'." With this she gave another harsh cackle and swayed from the room. It was some minutes before I twigged that she was referring to the unhinged robot from outer space with the funny eyes, Brer Redwood.

Come the opening night, needless to say, the Chief Dalek was there in the front row, accompanied by his little chums, Lilley and Portillo, as prize a pair of bumlickers as I have seen outside of the Royal Opera House (as seen on TV), all clapping like mad. Margaret, fortified by a colossal overdose of the electric soup, raved on about the betrayal of the middle classes, all based I may say on a note from the Major about parking places in Tunbridge Wells and how he was going to vote for Blair.

Combined with her recent VG (Victory in the Gulf) Day Vera Lynn style comeback about why the hell they hadn't zapped Saddam while he was groggy and how Major had chickened out when it came to administering the killer punch, it all had a pretty destabilising effect at a time when O'Gooley has told her she ought to get as much rest as she can.

M. on such a high has always been a bit wearing, and things have not been made easier by the Boy Mark cropping up again in the blatts, his name linked this time to some buxom friend of Mrs Van der Kaffirbeshier. I rang Mrs Van der K. to find out what the little sod was up to, but she was too upset about her better half having been sexually interfered with by one of the Rottweilers.

See you at Simpsons for the Saga Promotion. Bring a big bag and you can stock up on all the freebee miniatures the whisky fellows give away.

Yours, still clinging to the Zimmer,

Dennis

FERGIANA TO BE SAVED BY US CONSORTIUM

by Our Heritage Staff
Bud Gee

ONE of Britain's least loved old wrecks, the SS Fergiana, has been saved from the scrap heap by two American businessmen.

Instead of being broken up, the rusty old hulk will be towed to California and will undergo a £3 million refit.

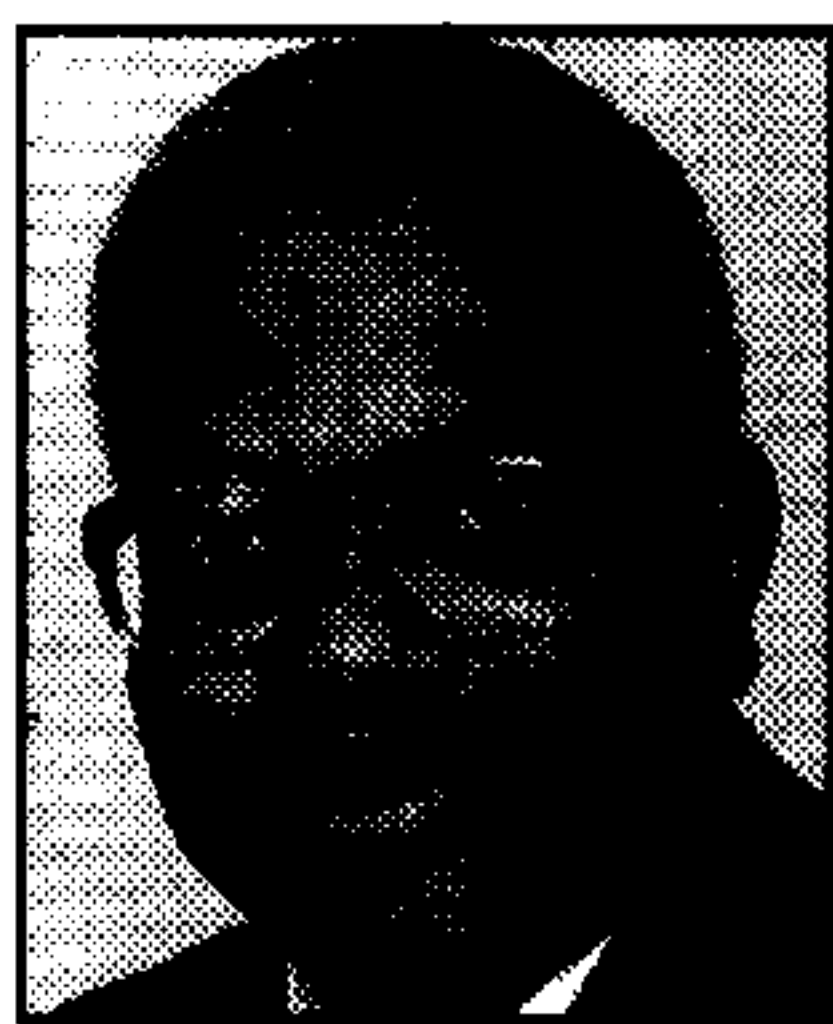
Said Oscar Dimwit III: "They will go crazy for the Fergiana. It's a chance for Americans to climb all over a real live member of the Royal Family. And all for ten bucks!"

Queen Mary

His partner, Orville Q. Dumschmuck, agreed: "Up till now only a couple of us Yanks have boarded the Fergiana and enjoyed the full Duchess Experience. Now the old gal's available to everyone!"

Queen Elizabeth

The entrepreneurs are now drawing up plans to bring over the Princess of Wales to join the Fergiana.



Trevor Barbados' Anthology

Trevor Barbados, presenter of News at Ten, is a lifelong lover of poetry. Here, only in the Daily Telegraph, he offers a weekly choice of his favourite verse.

The owl and the pussycat went to sea

Bong!

In a beautiful pea-green boat

Bong!!

And in part two how they met a pig with a ring through his nose which it sold for only a shilling.

Bong-Tree!!!

And finally how they danced hand in hand to the light of the moon.

And now Suzanne Charlton with a poem about the weather.

*It's raining, it's pouring
The readers of the Daily
Telegraph are snoring.*

© Charles Moore-Means-Verse

Inspector Morse

The Case of the Missing Pension Fund

(The overture to Mozart's "Il Grosso Bastardo" plays as vintage Jaguar purrs gently towards hideous council-owned country house viz. Headington Hall)

Lewis: What I don't understand, sir, is if the brothers didn't steal the £400 million, who did?

Morse: Think, Lewis! Think!

(Cut to agreeable Oxford pub. Lewis, carrying pint of "Old Captain Bob's Very Murky Very Stout", joins Morse at table)

Lewis: Well, obviously the old Mum didn't steal it, did she? She hated him. Or at least she said she did.

Morse: This beer's disgusting.

(Cut to another Oxford pub, "The Maxwell Arms". Morse is playing one-armed bandit called "Steal-a-Pension!")

Lewis: Forgive me, sir. We don't seem to be getting anywhere with this case. What about the Father then? Do we think he's innocent?

(Machine pays out jackpot)

Morse: He's dead, Lewis.

Lewis: Are you sure, sir?

Morse: I need another drink.

(Jaguar draws up outside enormous mansion in Molesford-on-Thames, sign reads "Dunnuthin'guv", home of Kevin and Pandora Maxwell)

Lewis: Nice house for a bankrupt.

Morse: (shouting) We've come to talk to you about Robert Maxwell.

Pandora Warnford-Davies: (for it is she leaning out of the window): Piss off, Morse! Why can't you leave us alone? We're going to make a fresh start. Maybe go into publishing or buy a Football Club.

Morse: We just want to...



Pandora: The jury has decided and that's all that matters.

(Pause)

Morse: Fair enough.

(Cut back to yet another Oxford pub, "The Crooked Man")

Lewis: So. Another case solved then, sir.

Morse: That's right. Nobody did it. We've been on a wild goose chase, Lewis, and the answer's been staring us in the face all along. *(Dramatic music)* The money stole itself. Simple, isn't it?

Lewis: Of course. So no one was to blame. The accountants, lawyers, bankers, directors, family. No one.

Morse: Correct. Only the pensioners for being stupid enough to entrust their money to such a fine upstanding businessman. I think this calls for a drink.

Lewis: Bitter?

Morse: We're not the SFO, Lewis.

(They laugh. Cut to Morse in Sheldonian listening to the Pergamon Orchestra playing "The Thieving Magpie" [shurely 'Magpie'? Ed.] by Grossini)

Ends

NEXT WEEK: Inspector Frost Investigates Nick Leeson.

Modern Nursery Rhymes No. 94 (Pt II)

This little Tiggy went to a party,
This little Tiggy should have stayed at home,
This little Tiggy had to listen to Diana's beef,
This little Tiggy would have none (of it)
And this little Tiggy went wee wee wee all the way to Peter
Carter Ruck again and told him to write a threatening letter to
Diana.



SPRING

"I'm looking for my youth"

The Andrew Neil Show 2.10-3.00pm BBC2

A live international talk show hosted by Brillo Pad, with viewers invited to participate by phone, fax, Internet and e-mail. Broadcast three times a week on BBC2 and also on BBC World (available in 49 homes in 111 countries).

Observer Preview

PRINCESS Diana's sister-in-law Countess Victoria Spencer has been booked for rail fare 'dodging', reports The Sun.

The report claims that the estranged wife of DI's brother was caught travelling from London Euston to Northampton with a ticket.

South Wales Echo

The Secret DIARY OF JOHN MAJOR aged 47 $\frac{3}{4}$

Monday

Today was a very historic day indeed, when I went to Paris, which is in France, for the funeral of Mr Monsieur Mitterrand. Although I cannot say I knew him well, I was a close personal friend and therefore I was placed in a position of great honour in Row 78B (restricted view). I was next to many world statesmen, including Mr Vaclav Bratpak, the Foreign Minister of Slavonia, Life President Gonzo of French Limpopoland (formerly French Rhumbabwe), and His Imperial Majesty King Babar the Elephant of Celesteville. When I looked round the pillar I could just see, in the distance, the unmistakable figure of my friend Mr Herr Kohl, sitting in the front row next to Mr Mitterrand's dog. I was very moved to see tears rolling down Mr Kohl's cheeks at the loss of his old friend. Should I cry as well, I wondered? I decided that this would give the wrong signals to our Euro-sceptics. But it would be quite wrong of me to encourage them by smiling. Oh no. I decided that the prudent course was to take the middle way by neither crying nor smiling, but looking not inconsiderably solemn.

Tuesday

I am entirely uninterested in Mrs Thatcher's big speech today. No one in the government is even going to it, except Mr Portillo, Mr Lilley and Mr Redwood. These three are all Bastards and are all in my Bastard book underlined in red ink, and Mr Redwood is not even in my government at all, owing to the fact that he resigned to try and get my job, although he only got 89 votes, which is hardly any, considering that no one had even heard of him.

Wednesday

All the papers have got it completely wrong, as usual. They say that Mrs Thatcher's speech was a tremendous attack on me. It was no such thing. When she talked about "weak, hopeless leadership, which would lose the next election", she was clearly referring to Mr Blair and his so-called New Conservative Party. I am also very

confused by Mrs Thatcher's remark about a "One nation party" being a "No nation party". Perhaps she meant a "No Asian party" like Mr Enoch Powell wanted. Or possibly a "One Asian party", meaning Mr Asil Nadir, who was so generous to us at the last election. She could however have meant to say that we were a "No station party", thereby endorsing our policy of selling off the railways to bus companies, so they can close all the stations down. I asked my wife Norman what she thought Mrs Thatcher meant. She replied: "She should have said that you are a One-Notion party, since your only idea seems to be to stay in power as long as possible without doing anything."

Thursday

Who says that I am finished, apart from everyone? Today my majority went up by no less than 20 percent, ie one seat. This is because I decided to let Sir Richard Body back into the Conservative Party. I therefore removed him from my "Looneys" book, where he was listed under "Picnic, apples short of a" and also "White coats, flapping of". He has pledged to give me his total and unswerving support, provided that I do whatever he says on the subject of fish. I told him I would do everything in my power to look into the fish that he was worried about. He said that this wasn't good enough and walked out. I have had to put him back into Looney book under the new heading "Extremely Fishy".

Friday

In the House of Commons today someone on the Labour side asked me if there was "a plot to get rid of me as leader". Mr Heseltine immediately jumped to his feet and said: "Yes, of course there isn't!"

Everyone laughed except for Mrs Widdecombe who has no sense of humour, unlike me. I laughed a great deal to prove that we are the party of laughter. Oh yes.

The other side merely repeated the question, proving that they have no new ideas.

"Are the men in grey suits going to come and get you?" they shouted. "No," I said, quick as a flash. "How can they do that when I am wearing a grey suit myself!"

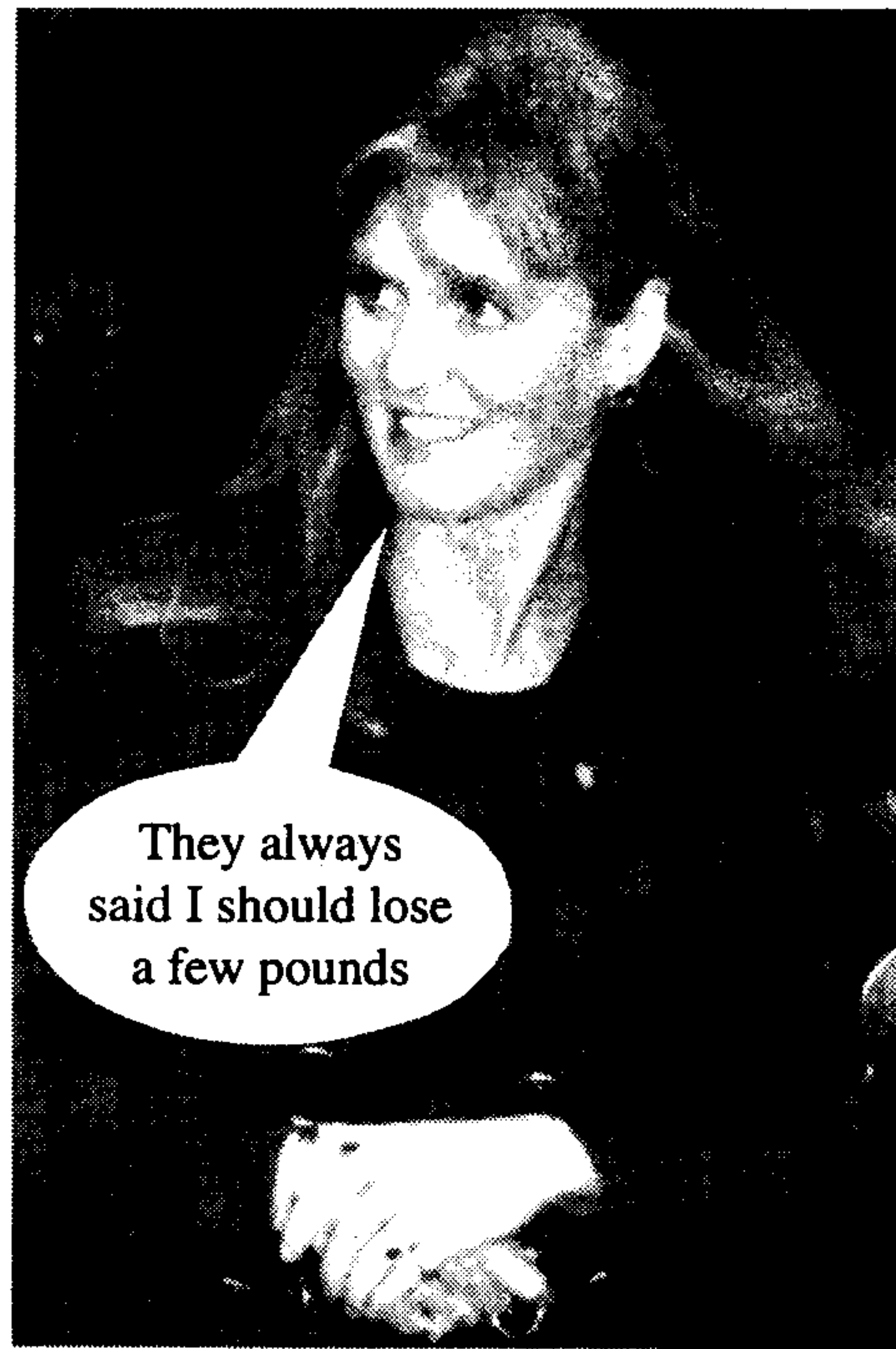
This put a stop to their silly questions about a so-called plot and they were reduced to cheering loudly and singing "Goodby-eee!"

Saturday

My ex-friend Norma Lamont has finally found a seat in a town with a local branch of Thresher's. It is in Harrogate, which Mr Mawhinney tells me is a safe seat.

"He has a majority of 20,000," he told me. "Good," I said. "Then he will lose."

FERGIE BANKRUPT



ST OLAVE'S 11-Plus Selective Entrance Examination

(Time allowed: 3 hours)

1. Is your mother in the Labour Shadow Cabinet?
2. Has she read the Labour Manifesto?
3. Imagine in your own words how she will justify her decision to send you here when she is grilled by TV's Jeremy Paxman.
4. Multiple Choice: Given that the leader of the Labour Party has sent his own son to the Brompton Oratory School, will he:
 - a) sack your mother?
 - b) ignore the whole thing and hope all the tiresome lefties don't go on about it for too long?
 - c) promote you to Secretary of State for Education when he wins the next election?
5. Name the odd one out: John Major, Michael Heseltine, Gillian Shepherd, Virginia Bottomley, Harriet Harperson. (Clue: This is a trick question. There is no odd one out.)



That New Scargill Party Manifesto in full

1 Brothers (i.e. me) and sisters (i.e. Mrs Scargill). We, the undersigned, hereby declare that we are totally sick of the revisionist aims of Blair and his so-called New Labour.

2 Blair and his cohorts are nothing more than crypto-capitalists in the pay of the press barons (i.e. Murdoch) and the City financiers (i.e. Lord Horlicks) who are to my mind totally the same as the utterly discredited Tories (i.e. Mrs Thatcher).

3 We hereby reaffirm our total loyalty and solidarity to the fundamental principles of socialism, as defined by Karl Marx, Keir Hardie and Arthur Scargill.

4 Who can forget the heroic battles which put the Labour Party where it was in its great days, i.e. Orgreave, Saltley Coke Depot etc, when a tiny band of heroic working men and women led by the visionary Arthur Scargill defied all the armed might of the Fascist police led by the ruthless tyrant Thatcher?

5 Did you see her the other night going on about how she would have won the Gulf War? It is totally sickening to think of those thousands of Iraqi working men who were sacrificed so that Tony Blair could have lunch in City boardrooms with his fat-cat capitalist cronies, chomping on his cigar and swigging magnums of five-star brandy, gifts from Mrs Thatcher whose only aim in life is to get her revenge on me for my crucial part in her downfall.

6 If you share our aims or would like to know more about the Scargill Party, please write to me: Screaming Lord Scargill, Care in the Community, Scargie House, Scargsdale Villas, Scargborough, Yorks.

Signed
Sid and Doris Scargill
(Party Membership nos 1 and 2)

Correction

In common with all other newspapers we have been asked by the Health Minister to point out a typographical error that has occurred in his press releases concerning the treatment of mentally ill patients outside the medical institutions in which they were previously confined.

Stories such as "Care in the Community Works", "Care in the Community — Record speaks for itself" and "Government defends Care in the Community" should all have had the letter 'S' before the word 'Care'.

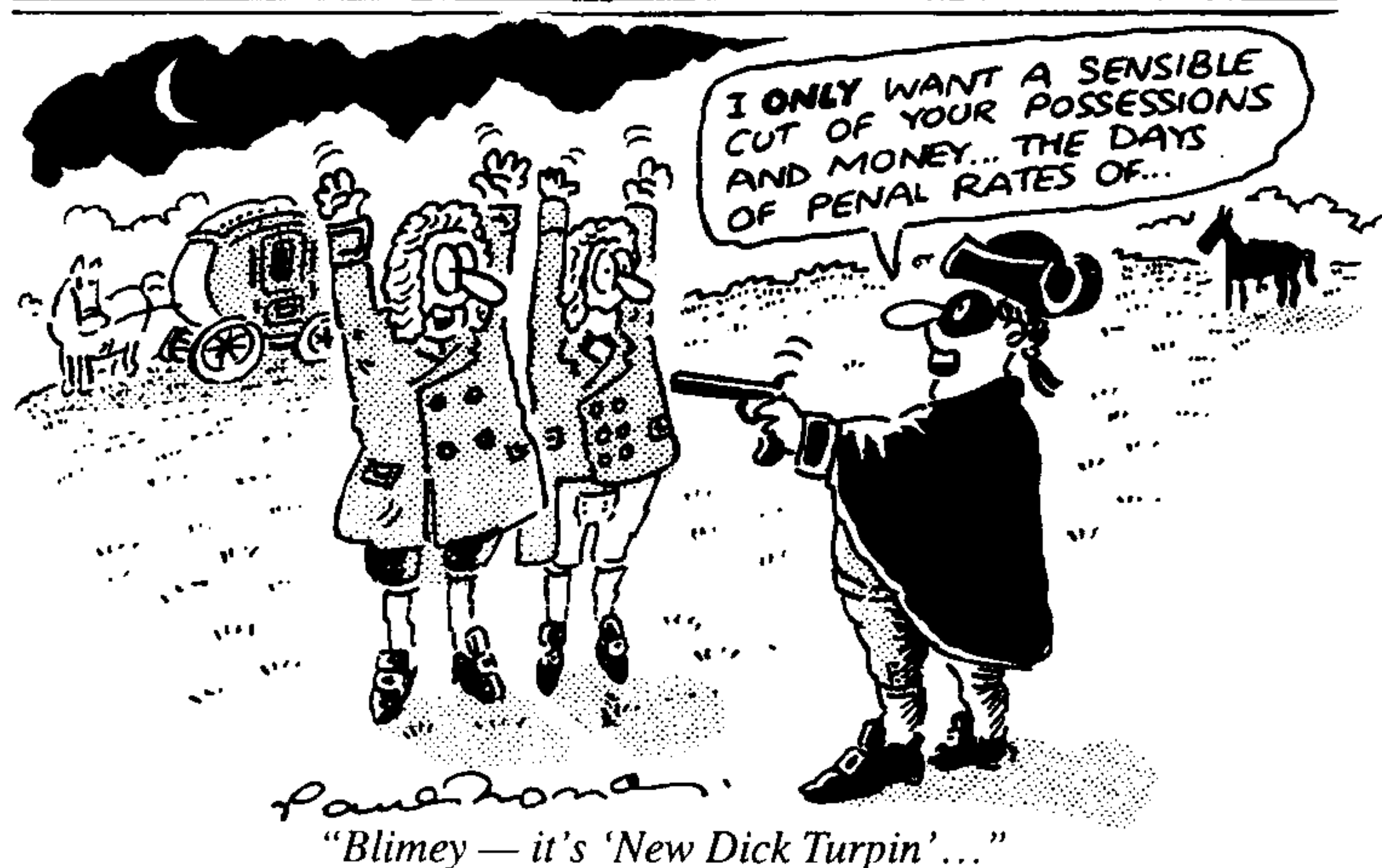
The Government regrets this inexplicable confusion and wishes to make it clear that their policy of scaring the community out of its wits by releasing psychopaths onto the streets has indeed been a triumph.

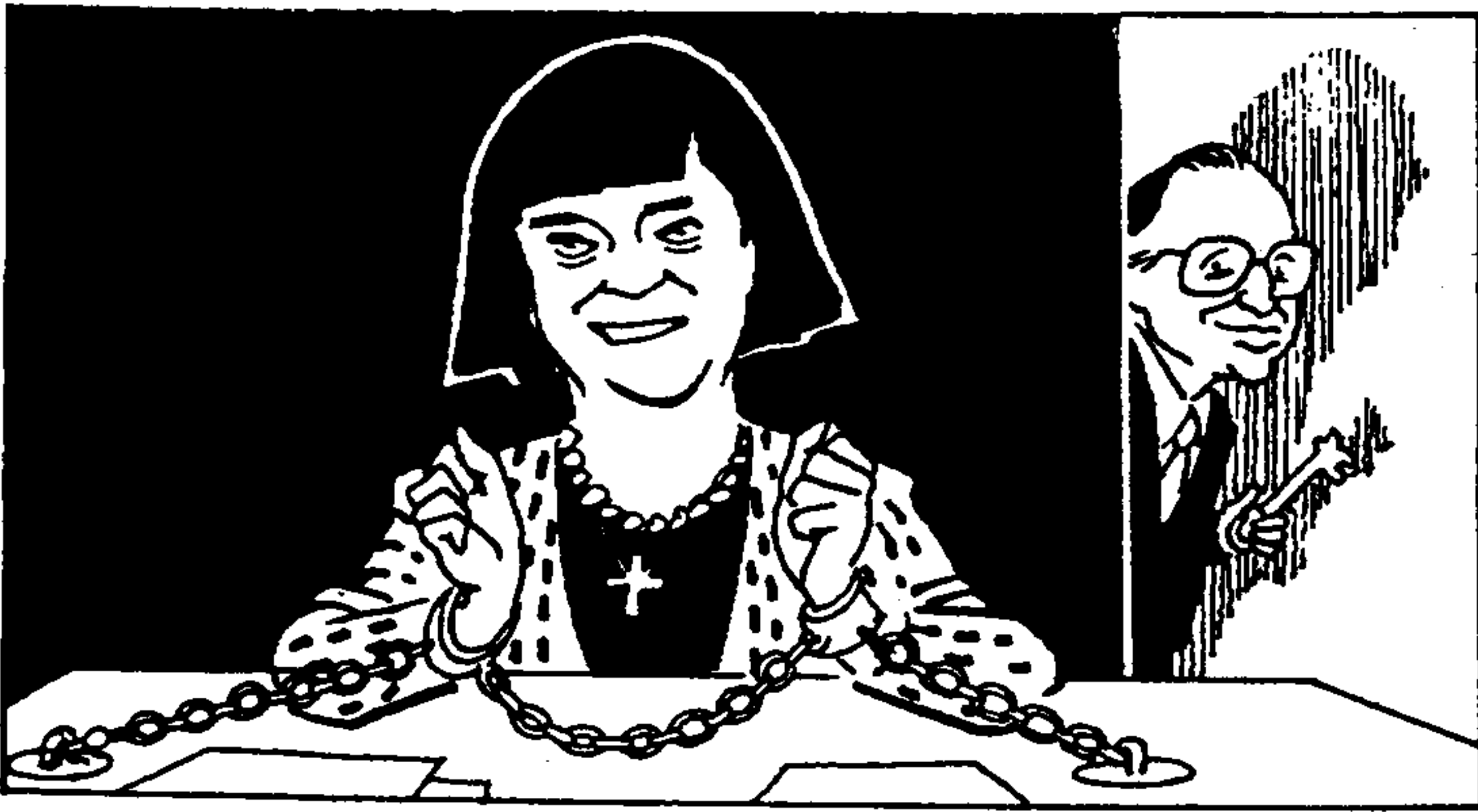
We are happy to accept this correction and will furthermore ensure that in all future editions of this newspaper the phrase "Care in the Community" will read "Blair in the Community".



Great Bores Of Today.

"... I've known Karen's father for fifty years... actually I met him in 1943 so how long's that? hang on it's 53 years isn't it? good god it can't be as long as that... anyway we were at prep school together and then Tom left to go to Sedbergh up north and I rather lost touch with him but then we met up again in the army... we were both stationed in Aldershot and I could tell you some stories about Tom in those days... but anyway he married the delightful Daphne in 1962... or was it 1967? it was the year that Hampshire did terribly well in the League... Tom and I went to see them play Sussex or was it Surrey? Maybe it wasn't Tom... anyway it wasn't long before the charming Karen arrived on the scene and Tom asked me to be her godfather... everyone else had turned the job down apparently ha ha ha! no not really Karen... and who would have thought that they tiny baby girl who I dandled on my knee and who left a little damp patch a few times too if you remember Karen? ... she grew up to be the most beautiful blushing bride we see here today and I think we all agree she's a credit to her mother and father and of course Karen is I understand very much the career girl working as she does at the TSB where she has done very well... which brings me on to a very funny story about how Roger... Richard sorry... proposed... he works in the TSB as it happens in another department... er... it says here 'Information Technology' whatever that means... and erm... he wanted to ask her out and he wasn't sure if she would say 'yes' because you see the TSB always says 'yes' ha ha ha or is that the Woolwich? ... oh I see the band are ready to play again so I ask you to charge your glasses to Sharon... sorry Karen... and Roger... sorry Richard..."





'WOMEN WILL BE CHAINED' claims defiant Government

by Our Prison Staff **Stanley Holloway**

THE Government last night announced that it would be extending its policy over chaining to include Home Office Ministers who were out of control.

"There are some women," said a spokesman, "who, if not chained, will run straight into a television studio and do serious damage to the Government's reputation."

He continued: "It is all very well feeling sorry for these women, but the fact of the matter remains that offenders such as Anne Widdecombe are a danger to themselves and to the general public. They have to be chained to their desks where they can continue their labour without risk of doing anything stupid."

STALKER IS OLD CAKEIAN

by Our Royal Staff
James Whitakers-Allmadeup

THE MAN at the centre of the so-called Royal Stalker affair has today been named as a former pupil at the prestigious £120,000-per-term St Cakes public school.

He is Quintin Montgomery-Droom, 59, who was in E Dorm (Crippens) from 1947-50. The headmaster at the time was Sir Reginald Kipling, father of the present Head Mr Rudyard Kipling.

Sir Reginald, 107, said that he remembered Droom very well.

"He was a small boy who wore short grey trousers and a cap."

School records reveal that the man who would later hit the headlines as Royal Menace Number One for his relentless romantic pursuit of the Duke of Edinburgh (*shurely 'Princess*



Anne' or 'the Queen'? Ed) showed promise at St Cakes in a number of subjects, including "algebra, Greek verse and PT (particularly the Horse).

Droom's father, also an Old Cakeian, had been a tea-planter in Ceylon and had once met Edward VII on a royal visit to the Droom plantation in the Balti hills. Droom Senior had presented His Majesty with a box of Orange Blossom tea for which the King had subsequently awarded him the British Empire Cross (Third Class).

It is believed that this tenuous link with royalty later led to the young Droom's unhealthy obsession with (*This is drivell. You're fired. Ed.*)

The Alternative Rocky Horror Service Book

No.94 A Service of Thanksgiving for The Motor Car (to be held in Coventry Cathedral)

The President We are gathered together to give thanks for God's greatest gift to mankind, the automobile. Honk if you agree with me.

The congregation, sitting in their cars, shall then sound their horns in response.

All: We give honks unto the Lord.

There shall then be a reading from the Book of Genesis.

"And on the fourth day God created the car. And it was on this wise. First created he four wheels. And above the wheels he placed the chassis. And below the bonnet placed he the magneto, the fanbelt, the spark plugs and the windscreen wash with added detergent.

"And God said, 'Let there be lights'. And there were lights, one set in the front and one set at the back, and one above the front windscreen which never quite worketh.

"And God saw that it was good.

"And God said 'Let there be a cigarette lighter, central locking, an immobiliser device, quadraphonic stereo even unto a sticker which sayeth, Baby On Board'.

"And God saw the accessories and saw that they were good."

Here ends the First Reading.

Hymn No.94

"The Daimler thou gavest Lord is ended."

The Blessing of The Motors

The congregation will then drive their cars up to the altar for the 6000-Mile Service (or the Holy Carmunion, or the Eu-car-ist, depending on denomination).

Bishop: Blessed are the car makers.

All: For they shall make money.

The Interruption

At this point there shall be an demonstration against the motor car and all its works by an fully unclothed female person, who will adress the congregation in this wise:

The Car is Death. Traffic Accidents Kill. So Does Pollution. Toddlers Are At Risk From Lead. The Newbury By-Pass Is Destroying The Planet.

The Arrest

Inspector Knacker (for it is he): Come along now, love, you could catch your death standing there.

Bishop: Well, there's some Good Nudes For Modern Man.

All: Ha, ha, ha, ha.

The demonstrator is then removed to the East Door to give interviews to the Coventry Evening Telegraph and Radio Nuneaton's religious slot.

Prayers

"O Lord, protect us as we drive along the great motorway of life. Help us to stay in the lane to which we are called. Let us gird ourselves with the seat belt of righteousness and the airbag of truth (optional, driver's side only) until we shall reach that Happy Eater in the sky."

Bishop: A Happy Eater to you all.

All: And a happy Xmas to you, Reverend.

All shall then drive at top speed towards the exit. Some may cry "Get out the way, you bastard", "Indicate, dickhead" or some such sign of peace.

The Bishop: Bloody Sunday motorists.

© George Car-ey (in the year of Our Ford 1996)

Next Week in the Eye

The Shock New Royal Biography That Finally Rips
The Lid Off The Monarchy

The Queen You Never Knew!

ROYAL biographer Lady Ludmilla Starborgling has been given unique access to old copies of the Daily Telegraph, by permission of the Queen herself, and has come up with the most shocking and intimate account ever published of the woman she calls simply "Her Majesty".

Among the sensational revelations that will leave the nation gasping, Lady Ludmilla reveals the following revealing revelations:

-  *The Queen's lifelong association with a naval officer known only as "Prince Philip, The Duke of Edinburgh".*
-  *Her secret love of horses and how she regularly slips out of the Palace to watch them run at Ascot.*
-  *The endless parties she throws on board the Royal Yacht for black men (N. Mandela).*
-  *Her secret weekly meetings over the years with a string of men (and one woman), marked in her diary with the code "Weekly Audience with Prime Minister".*

The Tale of Pigling Bland

by Beatrix Dennis Potter

ONCE upon a time there were two little Piglings. Their names were Pigling Bland and Pigling Birt. And they lived together in a little sty called London Weekend Television.

The two little piglets liked nothing so much as to get their sweet little snouts firmly into the nearest trough.

But one day Pigling Birt disappeared. Pigling Bland was very sad. But he cheered up a lot when he was given £9 million for doing nothing.

He left the old sty and wandered about, sitting on boards and wondering where he could get his snout into the trough next.

Then one day he heard a familiar sound. "Oink, oink." It seemed to come

from over the hills and far away.

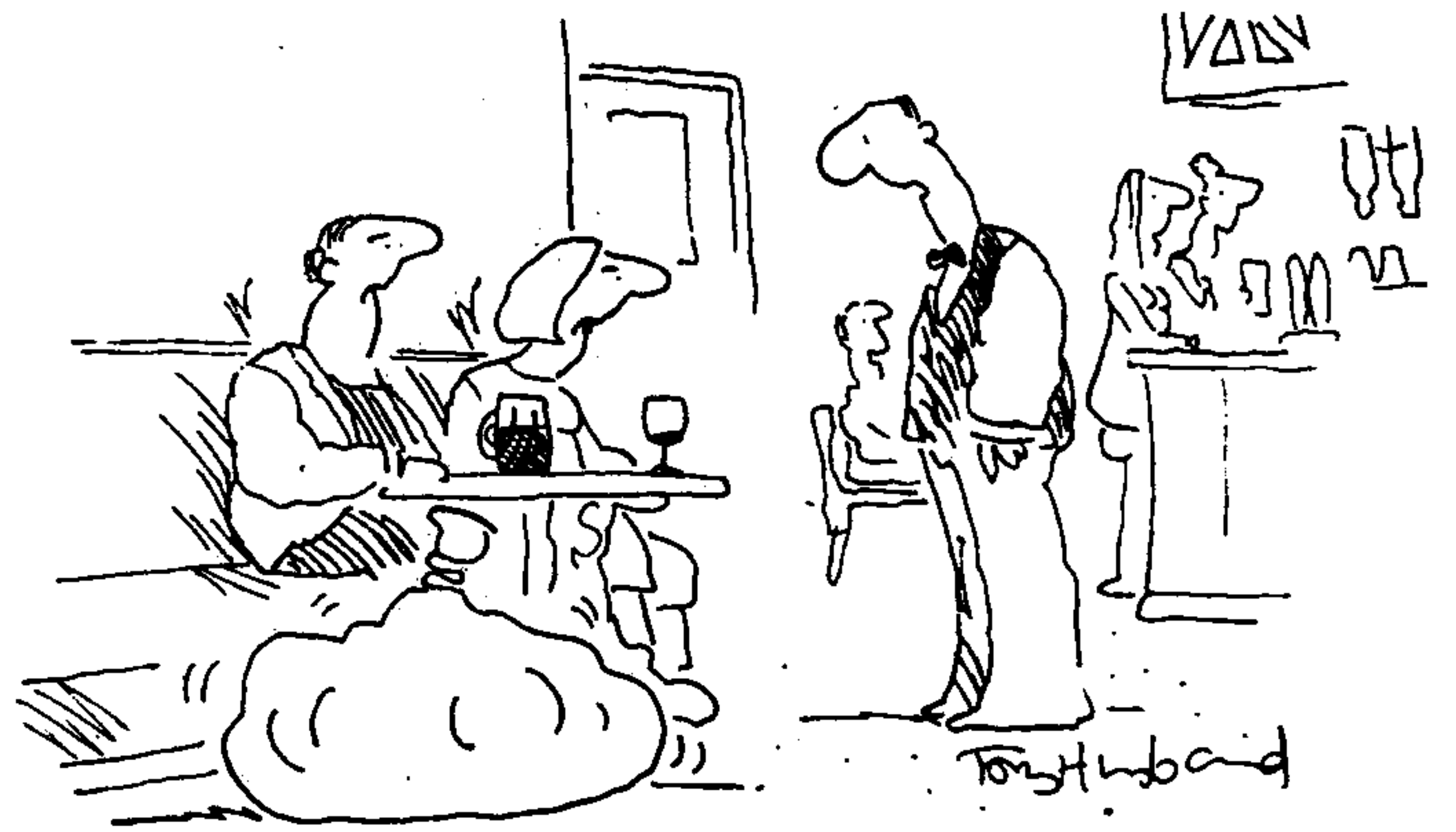
Pigling Bland skipped happily along to where the sound was coming from, and who should he see but his long-lost friend Pigling Birt, presiding over the biggest sty you ever saw.

"Come and join me," said Pigling Birt. "You can be Chairpig." So Pigling Bland agreed and they lived happily ever after running the BBC (Birt-Bland-Carveup).

A video of this story can be obtained from BBC Worldwide Enterprises.

ALSO AVAILABLE: The Story of Peter Grabbit - the story of an ex-Ambassador to Washington who gets a job with the BBC because no one else will employ him.

NO LONGER AVAILABLE: The Flopsy Hussey.



"I'm sorry - even if your children are in a sack they aren't allowed in the bar after eight..."

The Times

SOMETHING FOR THE DUSTBIN

THE PROBLEM with parents is that however diligent one tries to be as a child there comes a point when they do something very bad. With my father this is usually a column about me. With my mother it is usually a column about my father, or another one about me.

And what is one supposed to do? Naturally, in the heat of the moment, the temptation is to chastise the parents. One wants to discipline them, to make them say sorry for writing all this rubbish in the Times. "Mummy, Daddy - stop it!" I scream, losing my temper and entirely forgetting that parents who are only in their late thirties

have very little understanding of the concept of restraint.

So I have to resort to "slapping" them - yes, all right I admit it, "hitting" them - in the hope that they will eventually learn from their mistakes.

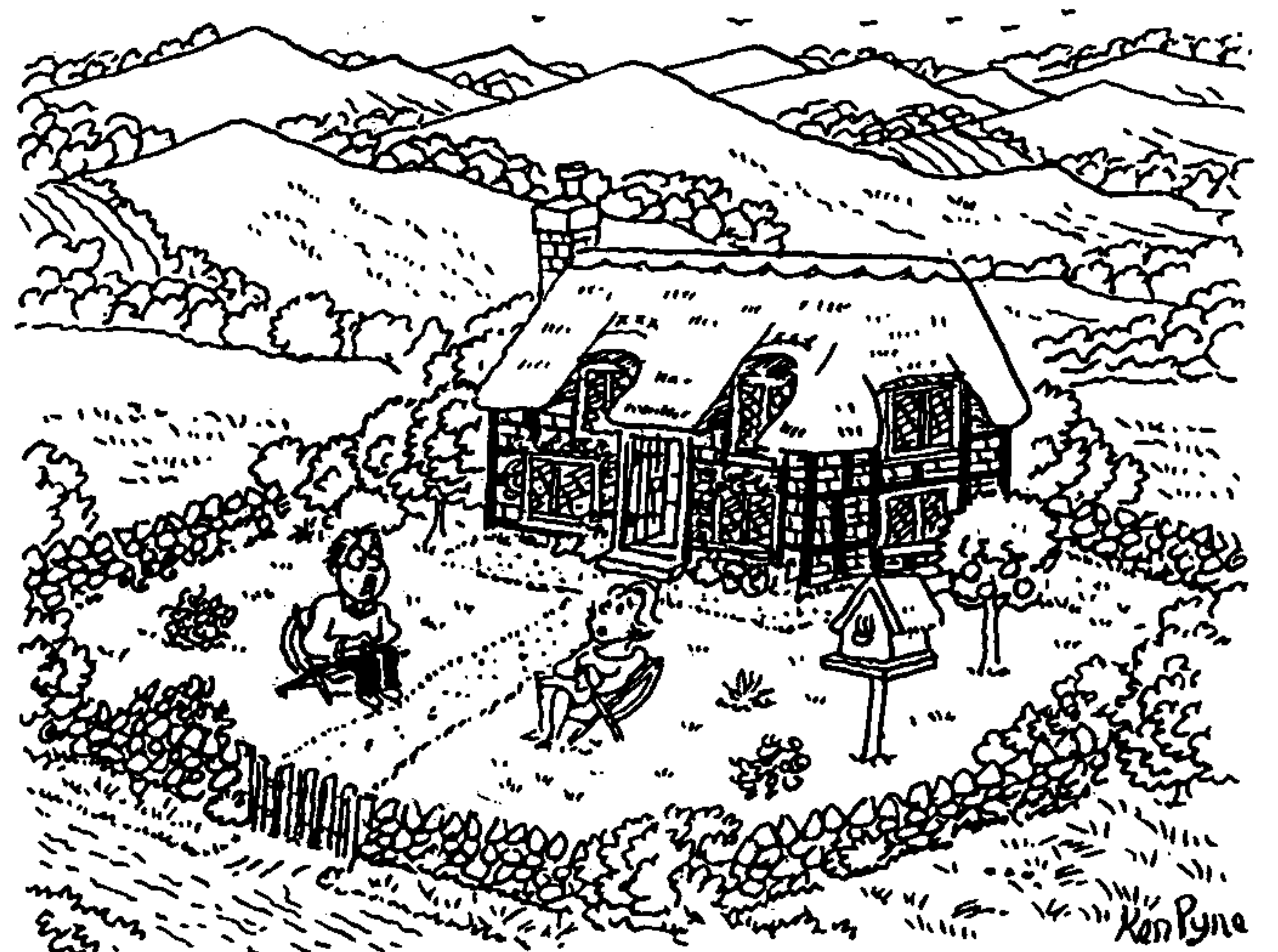
In the end, though, one suspects that they will just repeat themselves endlessly, falling into an unbreakable cycle of self-referential columns,

and the admonishing "smack" that I have delivered will have achieved little except to give momentary pleasure to all their readers.

© CosyMa and CosyPa Lawson-Diamond Enterprises plc in association with The Times.



Cosima
Lawson-
Diamond,
aged 2



"Perhaps we could find a little place in the city somewhere just for weekends?"

Lives Of The Saints



No. 94 St Cristina of Odone

AND in the year of Our Lord 1996, there dwelt in London a beautiful young Italian girl, whose name was Cristina. She dressed very modestly, in only the tiniest of skirts, and was known throughout the land for her deep piety and devotion to men. A noted scholar, Cristina soon won recognition when she was appointed editor of the Catholic Herald in order, as one of the holy fathers put it, to "spice it up a bit". Her fame spread far and wide, and she began to perform miracles. Many elderly men who were thought to be dead were brought

to life when they caught but the merest glimpse of her shapely legs and comely embonpoint (© The Venerable Peregrine of Worsthorne). Such recipients of her miraculous powers included the Blessed Auberon of Combe Florey, and Saul (later Paul) of Johnson, a poor, red-faced prophet of deranged wits who wandered the streets crying: "Why, oh why?" Her most celebrated devotional utterance was that she would "like to have sex 900 times a day with 6,000 different men".

© Brother Giovanni di Rumpole

OBITUARY

Professor Richard Cobb

by Professor Norman Stone

MY OLD friend Dick Cobb was one of the last great drunken historians in a long line which includes such illustrious names as Herodotush, Thushidides, Holinshed, A.J.P. Taylor and myself. There'sh a very good shtory about Profeshor Pawshon, in

which he had to be carried acrossh the quad by no fewer than sheventeen college portersh. There'sh a shwan comes into the shtory shomewhere, but I can't remember the detailsh. We shall not shee hish like again. *Will this do? N.Sh.*

Get on the Information Superhighway

Your Guide to those Hot New Net Addresses

george@bustalk.barnsley.uk — Full 1967 Greater Manchester Bus Timetable listings (Levenshulme Area).

hotdate@megababes.chatpoint.uk — Thirty five sad computer studies undergraduates hoping a woman has logged onto the server.

drunkbusinessman@lunchbreak.co.uk — Phwoar! Kathy gets her kit off! Download this picture of Curvy Kathy!

emma@femidom.bobbitt.uk — Country Line Dancing as a tool for female oppression throughout the 1930s.

nige@jelly.whippedcream.uk — Till 3 at Barking Tesco's somehow managing to get itself connected to the internet and conduct a three-week romance with a cash point machine in Mold, North Wales.

fondue@cheesetalk.uk — Get on the PC/Cheese interface and discover many interesting facts about North Western cheese using the newly installed Wensleydale Browser.

toffee@yum.yum.co.uk — More information about this ever popular chocolate bar. Includes the much sought after toffee crisp screen saver!

international@quadron.research.uk — Bulletin board of the International Quadron research group.

parents@education.online.co.uk — Educating your children through the electronic superhighway. The internet as a valuable learning resource.

children@education.online.co.uk — Phwoar! Kathy gets her kit off!

anorak@trekkies.ncc1701.uk — Jane Austen's complete works translated into Klingon. The *only* location on the internet offering this service.

intro@server.root.uk — How the internet can broaden your horizons and introduce you to a whole new world of experiences.

'DEAD WOMAN' COMES TO LIFE ON TV

by Our Medical Staff
Dr Thomas Utterfraud

A WOMAN who everyone thought had died some years ago sat up and gave a lecture, it was revealed last night.

People were asking: "How could it possibly happen in 1996?"

Mrs Margaret Thatcher was pronounced dead in 1990, after she had been stabbed in the back by a number of her close friends.

"There didn't seem to be any doubt that she was dead," said a local MP (surely GP?) Dr John Major. "Those closest to her were very shocked indeed. We didn't expect her back and we are thinking of bringing proceedings for compensation."

Last night Mrs Thatcher said: "I've never felt more alive. They tried to bury me but I am immortal".

Paul Johnson writes...
We salute Lady Lazarus! p. 94

ADVERTISEMENT



The
ROYAL
OPERA

'Das Zacking von der Ticketmanager'



AN OPERA POUFFE

Directed by Jeremy
Isaackedtheticketmanager

Including hit arias 'Old Queen of the Night Shift' and 'Your Tiny Salary is Frozen'

AS SEEN ON THE BBC

Look & Learn (Part 94): The Ascent of Man



4m BC: Man comes down from the trees



4,000 BC: Man invents wheel



1996 AD: Man goes back up the trees

KNEE SAYS 'I'M STAYING WITH NEASDEN'



By E.I. Erwego, Our Man On The Terraces With The One-To-One Mobile Phone And The Mercury Bill For £14,785.84

THE WORLD of soccer was rocked to its foundations yesterday when Neasden's legendary tight-lipped supremo Ron Knee announced that he would not be taking the job as England manager.

"Admittedly," he told reporters, "it has not been offered to me but it will be eventually, mark my words, and when that happens I will tell the FA that my future is with the lads at Neasden Bridge.

English players, who are all useless. To put it in a nutshell, they do not know one end of a football from another."

Ron Knee is 57.

Terry Vulnerable

So far the FA have found no takers for the prestigious role of being attacked by the tabloids when England lose (shurely 'master-minding the renaissance of English football'? Ed).

Ron Knee, however, explained that his reluctance to sit in the hot seat at Wembley was simple.

"At Neasden my squad is the cream of soccer's United Nations, with such legendary names as Germany's Klingfilm, Brazil's Alta Rica, France's Depardieu, Italy's Cappuccino, Serbia's Slobachopz and, of course, Rumbabwe's M'Jojoba.

"If I were to take charge of England, I would have to pick

Stop Press

Last night William Hill announced the following odds on the new England manager:

Jimmy Hill 9/2
Damien Hill 15/8
Damien Hirst 100/30
Red Rum 33-1
Red Ken 50-1
Jeffrey Bernard 150-1
Lionel Jeffries 200-1
Lionel Blair 300-1
Tony Blair 4-9

LATE SCORE

England X1 0
Neasden 1
(Venables [o/g])

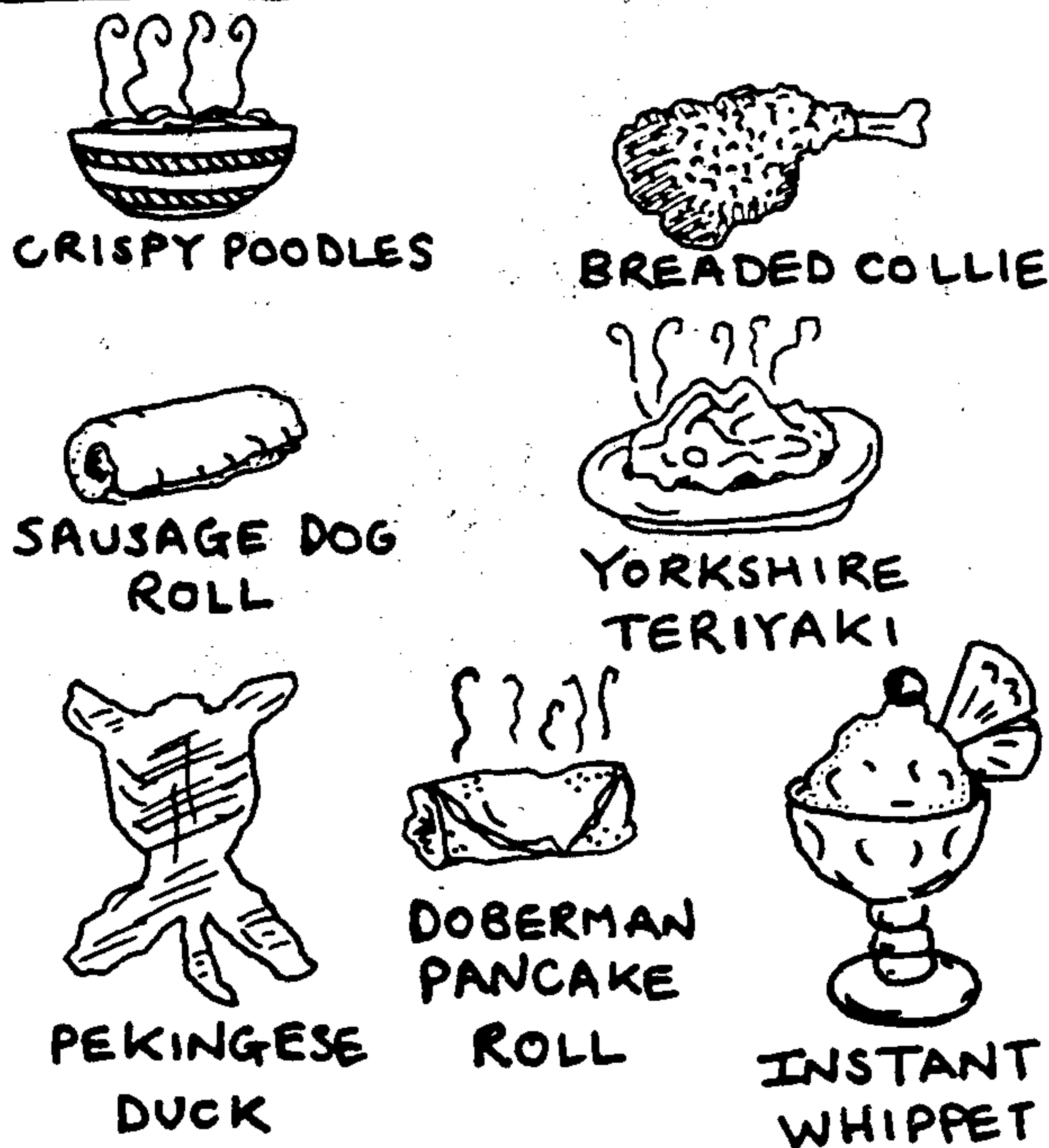
YESTERDAY'S story regarding an inquest into the death of Christopher Mason incorrectly stated in the headline that he died in prison. We are happy to point out that Mr Mason was found dead in a cell at South Shields police station and apologise for any upset caused.

Newcastle Journal

The United Reformed Church in Bourne is holding tits next coffee morning and bring and buy sale on Saturday January 13

Stamford & Spalding Herald & Post

Apparently... BY MIKE BARFIELD KOREAN RESTAURANT FAVOURITES:



DIANA IN MERCY VISIT TO HOMELESS TRAMP

by Our Royal Correspondent Inbred Sewage

IN A top secret late night visit to the offices of the Daily Mail, Diana the Queen of Hearts, dropped off some heart-rending photographs of herself engaged in a supreme act of charity.

The photos showed Diana visiting a sad homeless single parent who had lost all her money. The woman in question, who would only respond to the name "Fergiana Duchess of York", was the product of a broken home who had become addicted to the high-life.

Said a spokeswoman for

Princess Diana (Princess Diana): "What I have done is an act of extraordinary compassion and humanity. Nobody else has any time for this poor woman. Even her mother-in-law, the Queen, has disowned her. But here I am showing the world that this tramp should not be judged just because she's been freeloading round the world spending a fortune on clothes and parties. Haven't we all?"

The Duchess of York is £2 million overdrawn.

Celeb

LIGGER



DIARY

Let's grapple with some issues, shall we? There are a whole range of topical issues confronting society today. And each day I like to try to "grapple" with a fresh one, hopefully in the company of some of my young friends.

There has been a tremendous amount of invigorating debate in the newspapers recently about an issue of very real importance to what one might call "the way we live now". It is an issue on which both young and those of us who are "not-so-young" — ! — have taken sides. I think it is up to each of us to decide exactly where we, as men, women and individuals, stand on the matter. I expect you have guessed the issue I am referring to. Yes, it's the great Blur Versus Oasis question. So why not let's pull up our shirtsleeves, take off our woollies, put on our thinking caps and get "stuck in" to grappling with the issue!

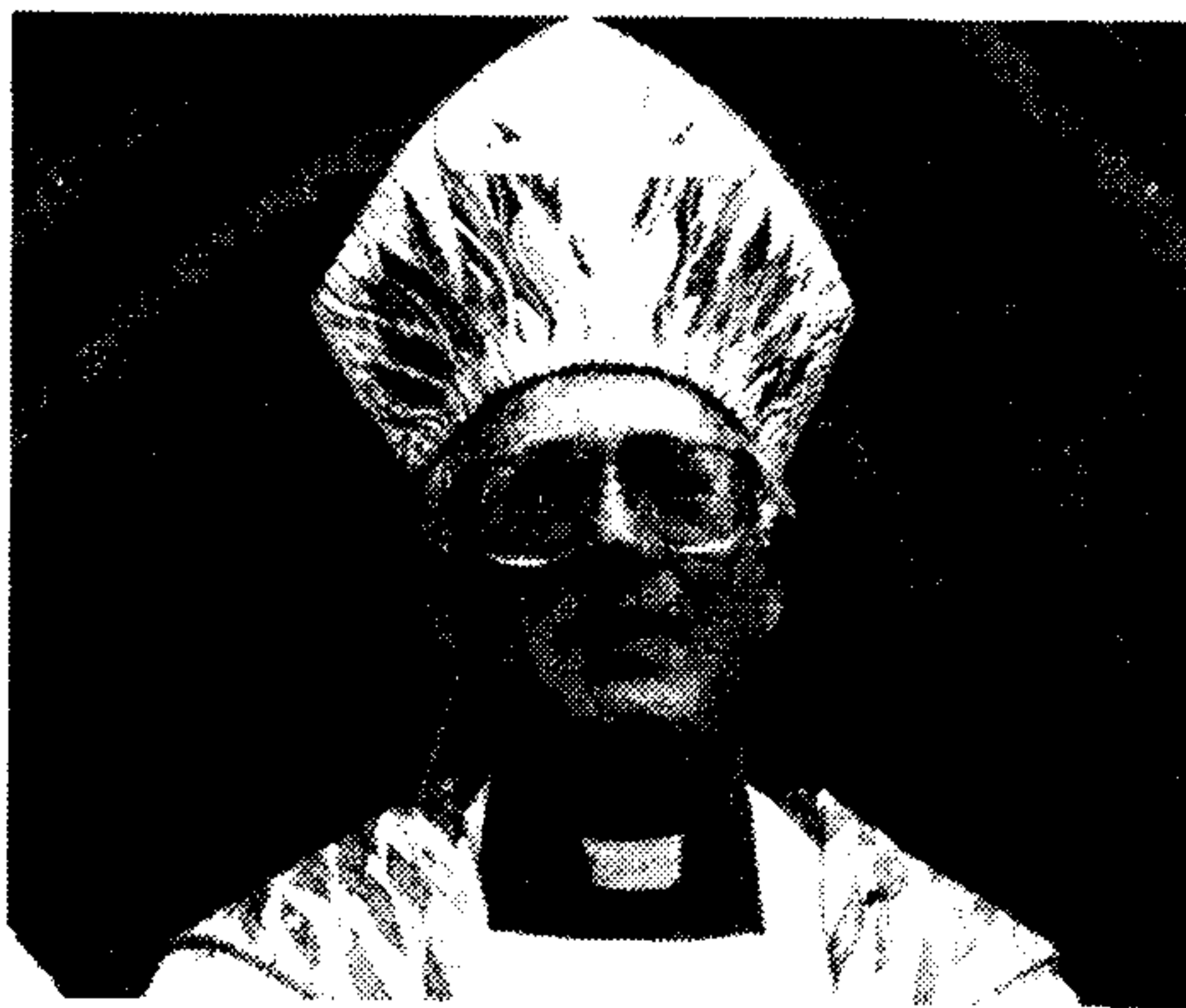
From a Christian point of view, there is a lot to be said for both these excellent young combos. Both exhibit a tremendous energy which we as Christians would do well to harness. Both make it their business to touch the lives of young folk, folk who so often feel ostracised from a society that can appear distant and authoritarian. And a good song, well-sung, with a good toe-tapping "beat" is, in the end, what the Christian message is all about.

Cast your mind back to those early days in Bethlehem. The Wise Men, The Shepherds, Mary and Joseph, Baby Jesus: they all sound like an exciting collection of very modern young "pop" groups, don't they? And it's easy to imagine them all tapping their toes and clicking their fingers as they bear witness to that great event, isn't it? Whether, in the strictly historical sense, they were singing "Away in a Manger" or the very latest from the "Britpop" hit parade is to my mind all a little bit irrelevant. The main thing is that they were singing at all, and, as we would put it today, "grooving to the beat".

So to the question, "Blur or Oasis?" my reply would be, "There's plenty of room for both in my home, thank you — and for Our Lord too, if you'll only make room for him!" Cheers!

How should we as Christians feel about the proposed new Newbury by-pass? Should we condemn it as an environmental disaster, destroying one of the finest beauty spots in the South? Or should we congratulate its creators on a remarkable piece of planning offering sorely-needed respite to a town already buckling under the weight of 300 juggernauts an hour?

I think it might be most Christian to say a



THE RT REV GEORGE CAREY, ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY

positive "Yes" to both points of view — not just "Yes! We like your new road!" but "Yes! We like your old trees!" too. This would pave the way for a middle ground, based on dialogue and conciliation. And perhaps the two groups, now united in harmony, would decide that the most Christian solution would be to get on and build the road, but to let the trees remain, poking up through the tarmac — a perfect symbol of the union of man and nature.

There may be those who complain that hundreds of trees sprouting up through a road will prove some sort of hazard to motorists. And to them I say this. If this proves to be the case, I would be the first to support the construction of a brand new by-pass to by-pass the new by-pass — just so long as the sincerely-held beliefs of the relevant environmental action groups are taken into account. Cheers!

Empathy. That's a difficult word. In fact, I sometimes worry that it's not a word we as a society truly understand. Sometimes we can be rather too quick to condemn the actions of those from different backgrounds to ourselves. Take Satan, for instance. There's one bloke who's had a very rough time of it recently. People are all too ready to caricature him as "most unpleasant", and I've even heard it said that he has horns and a pointy tail! But were I a betting man — which I am not, though I would hesitate to raise a disapproving finger to those who enjoy the occasional flutter, within reason — I'd wager you fifty new pennies that many of those who condemn Satan have barely given a thought to the poor fellow's feelings.

Look at it another way, and you will see that we in the Christian community have much to

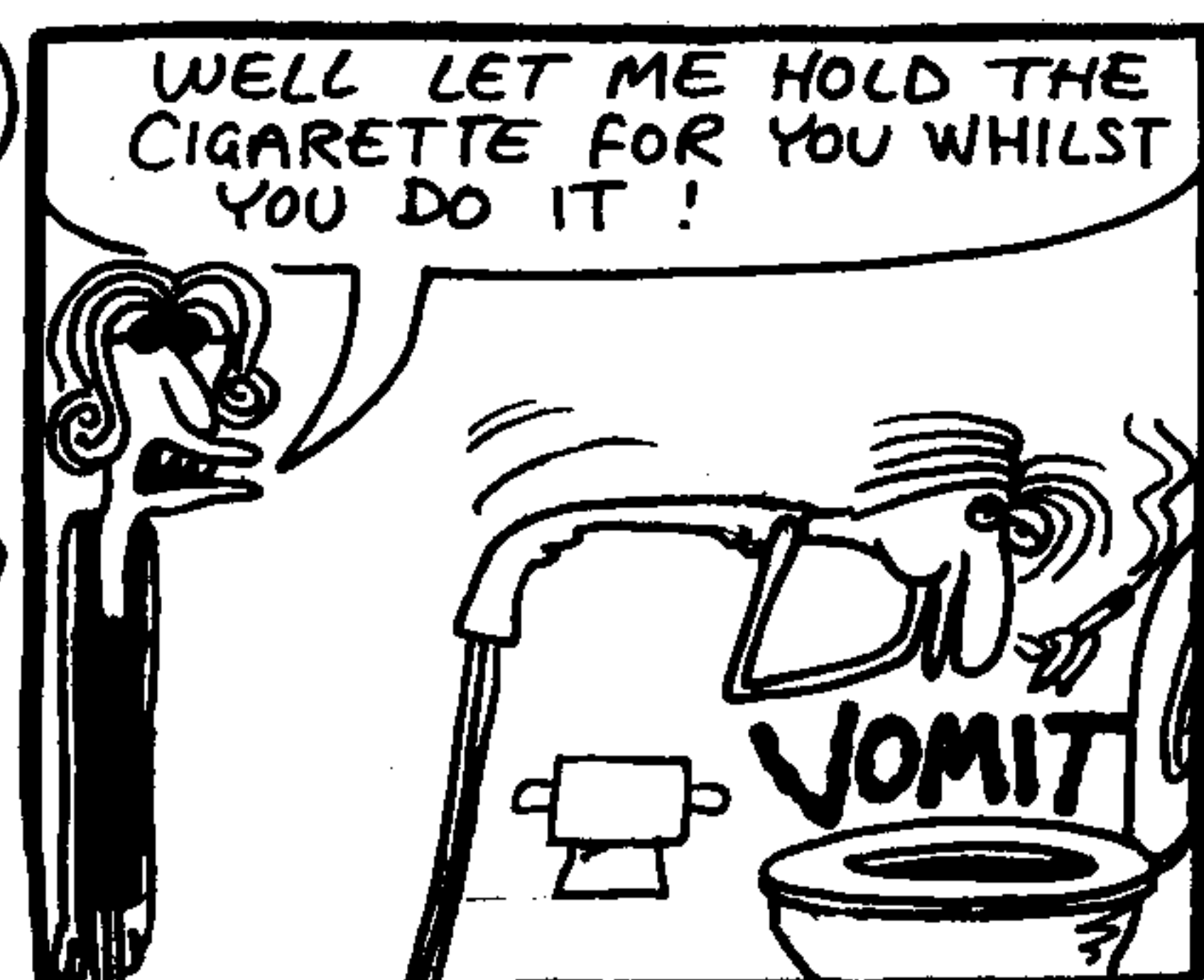
learn from Satan and his worshippers. We would do well to treat our so-called "rival" with the respect that is his due. Personally, I admire his terrific "fizz" and sheer professionalism. And hats off to him, too, in his uphill struggle to keep his numbers steady in these days of rapidly diminishing congregations.

I am not suggesting we forget the theological differences between Christians and Satan. Satan may place a little less emphasis on the power of good than we do, and in turn we may get rather more hot-under-the-collar over what one might call the "Thou Shalt Not" departments. But at my last meeting with him, I found Satan to be a very approachable sort of chap, full of get-up-and-go — as well as being a devoted fellow-fan of The Gunners! But above all, I admired him for sticking to a strong set of beliefs. Okay, so they may not conform rigidly to the beliefs of the Church, but then there's a bit of the rebel in all of us, and it's an energy worth harnessing. So let's not waste time splitting hairs — at least he's a bloke who believes in *something*, and that's to be cherished in this materialistic age. So in the spirit of ecumenism, I have held out the arm of friendship and asked Satan to pull up a chair and oversee a new commission to look into the whole question of what we as a Church actually "believe". His report, "Get Thee In Front of Me, Satan" promises much food for thought: I trust it will promote a lively debate, with light beverages to follow. And let's hope some of the man's magic will rub off on The Gunners next season, too!

I love a Big Mac. Personally I would go some way towards defending anyone's right to eat one. The Big Mac is a burger or "meat patty", pressed between two buns, topped with a little relish, and very tasty it is too.

What can we as a church learn from this tasty comestible? We too have our buns, but we call them "believers". And in between the believers, we place not a burger but a Church. But our Church contains the believers rather than vice versa, so that ours is a Big Mac with a difference: the meat patty on the outside, and the buns are in the middle. But what of the relish? For me, our relish is the young. I've got a tremendous amount of respect for the young, for their great energy and idealism, and I would like to see them spread all over our Big Mac, from top to bottom. Then we could eat it all up — church, meat patty, believers, relish, young and buns — before proudly proclaiming, "Lord, we have finished everything on our plate. May we now please get well and truly stuck into a Dunkin' MacDonut?"

SUPERMODELS



KERBER

TOILET SEX
SHAME MEN
FINED £4,000

'I don't know what came over me', embarrassed man pleads to magistrate

Esher News & Mail

Literary Review

Euro star

Cross Channel
Julian Barnes

(Jonathan Cape, £13.99)

LET'S parler Franglais No.94: *Au librairie* (at the bookshop).

M. Le Propriétaire: Bonjour.

Homme (qui porte le *Times*, le *Guardian*, le *Telegraph*, la *Revue Littéraire* de M. Auberon Waugh etc): Bonjour. Que pensez-vous de ce Julian Barnes, dont tous les gens littéraires parlent aujourd'hui?

M. Le Prop: M. Barnes? Il est un grand écrivain anglais! L'ami de M. Rushdie et le mari de l'agent littéraire formidable, Mme Kavanagh. Ah oui, tout le monde adore M. Barnes.

Homme (curieux): Est-il un novelist, ce M. Barnes?

M. Le Prop: Up to un point, monsieur. Récemment il a écrit des lettres de London pour le *New Yorker*. Son last novel was in 1991. Il s'appelle *Talking It Over*.

Homme: Ah! Je recollecte. Didn't les critics pensent que c'était up peu très similar du stuff de son ami Martin Amis et aussi boring?

M. Le Prop: Ils ne sont pas Amis (geddit?) any more. Et c'est pas vrai, anyway. M. Barnes est un grand philosophe. Vraiment. Absolument everyone aiment son livre nouvelle, le *Cross Channel*, les français en particulier.

Homme: Les français?

M. Le Prop: Oui. M. Barnes a un affection spectaculaire pour les français. Et les français pour M. Barnes. En 1988, pour exemple, il est nommé Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres. Un distinction top-hole. Et les petites histoires de *Cross Channel*, ces sont toutes about les français et les anglais.

Homme: Ah oui, of course. Throughout les siècles les intellectuels anglais adorent le Piat D'Or ("la culture française", surement? Red.): Voltaire. Proust, Sartre, Cantona. Le post-modernism, le deconstruction et tout ça. Comment sont les autre characteristics de ce francophile M. Barnes?

M. Le Prop: Il aime les français et il aime le detail.

Homme: Le detail, monsieur?

M. Le Prop: Absolument. Il y a certains écrivains qui aiment le "character". Il y a certains autres écrivains qui aiment le "plot". Mais M. Barnes, il aime le "detail". Beaucoup de facts. Un bucketload d'information. Le research. Les recreations historiques. Il y a une histoire formidable avec les demoiselles Victoriennes qui achètent un vinyard. Il écrit avec bags of style. He's a real écrivain's écrivain.

Homme: Et l'amour? Les discussions sérieux psychologiques? Les jokes?

M. Le Prop: Vous ne pouvez pas avoir everything monsieur. Comme les français disent (Cont. P94.)



BOOKS & BOOKMEN

BOOKSELLERS began to panic after Christmas when they noticed a strange trend in the sales of their most popular book.

Delia Smith's *Winter Collection* had surpassed all sales targets in the run-up to Christmas, selling an obscene half a million copies in its first week of publication alone. But only days after Christmas, booksellers were reporting in an unexpected number of the *Collection* being returned.

Could it be that Delia's warm lentil salad and prawn cocktail 2000 had not left the cooking classes salivating? Of course not. Middle England had apparently been so enthralled by the great chef that at Christmas they had all bought the book for everyone they knew, so people unwrapped two or three identical Delia books on Christmas Day and took their spare copies back to the bookshop in the following days.

The phenomenon is called "multiples", apparently.

BIG-hearted publisher Faber has been grabbing the imaginations of children in Australia with the cartoon characters, Bananas in Pyjamas.

The publisher granted the Australian Broadcasting Corporation rights to turn the original songbook into a TV programme, and ABC has since made \$10 million a year from the sale of more than 300 Bananas in Pyjamas products.

There is only one small problem

LUVVIES



EMMA THOMPSON
Back cover of 'Sense & Sensibility'
Screenplay and Diaries

for those raking in the millions, however: 63-year-old Carey Blyton, the nephew of the great Enid who made up the song in 1970. Unlike his aunt who got generous royalties from her most famous creation, Noddy, Carey has not seen any of the dough. ABC is now going to take the show to America and can expect ever greater profits.

VETERAN *Telegraph* man Lord Deedes was recently roused from his slumbers to find a large case of gin on his doorstep.

In a fit of post-Nolan inquiry distress he queried the delivery, scared there might be a conflict of interest if he accepted the tempting bottles of Gordons. However, he was relieved to find that the mystery benefactor was one Carol Thatcher, sending him some "tincture" in lieu of payment for his help on a biography of Denis Thatcher.

Deedes, having presumably consumed most of the crate, is quoted as saying: "Forget Maggie! Thish ish Denish's year!"

THE *New Yorker* was so pleased with Ian Hamilton's long article about Salman Rushdie in its new year issue it put out a special press release, describing the piece as "the first comprehensive attempt" to trace Rushdie's roots, based on interviews with his friends, ex-friends and ex-wife.

It was, however, rather too comprehensive for the taste of Bill Buford, the *New Yorker's* fiction editor: shortly before publication he cut several paragraphs out of the article for fear that they would upset the great novelist.

Naturally this act of editorial censorship had nothing to do with the fact that Bill used to be Salman's publisher, and that Salman was best man at Bill's wedding.

'Bookworm'

IN THE THEATRE

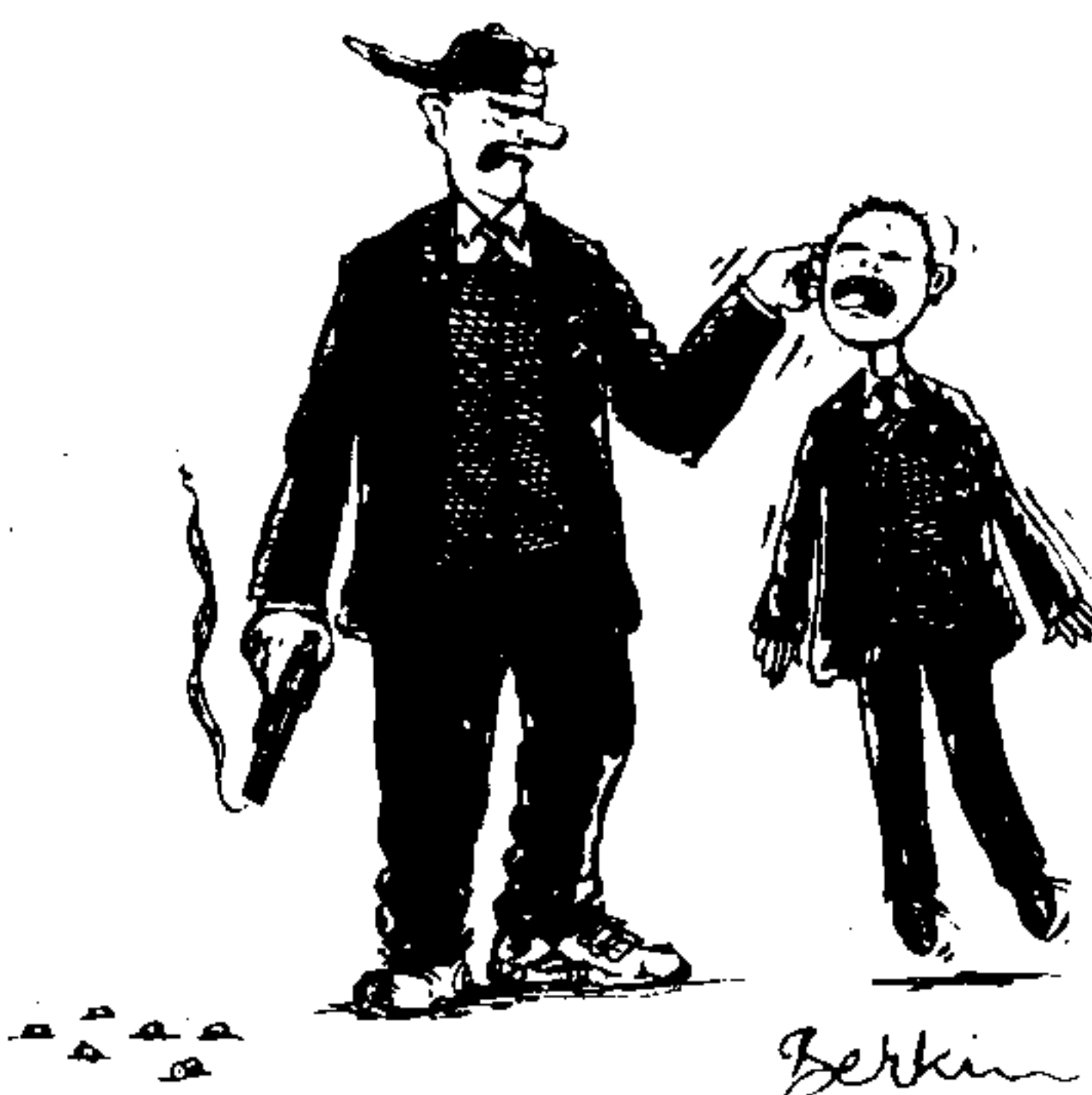
STORM clouds ahead for heritage secretary Virginia Bottomley over Arts Council funding of regional theatres — and for her MP hubby, the lovable Peter.

Mr Bottomley, who will find his marginal seat of Eltham under even greater threat after the next election's boundary changes, has been touting for selection in the safer seat of Guildford. But this puts Mrs B in a dilemma: her husband's would-be local theatre in Guildford, the Yvonne Arnaud, is involved in a row about the level of funding from the South East Arts Board.

Guildford folk moan about the large grant to the Redgrave theatre in Farnham, part of Virginia's own constituency of Surrey South West. It normally receives £180,000 of taxpayers' money, though this year will only receive £80,000 as it is temporarily closed. This is still more than the Yvonne Arnaud, however, which receives only £25,000.



So should Virginia exert her influence as heritage secretary to keep the money flooding into her own constituency's theatre — or increase the Yvonne Arnaud's slice of the funding cake and possibly boost her husband's selection chances? For advice she can always turn to a member of the South East Arts Board like Christopher Garnett. He is, after all, her brother.



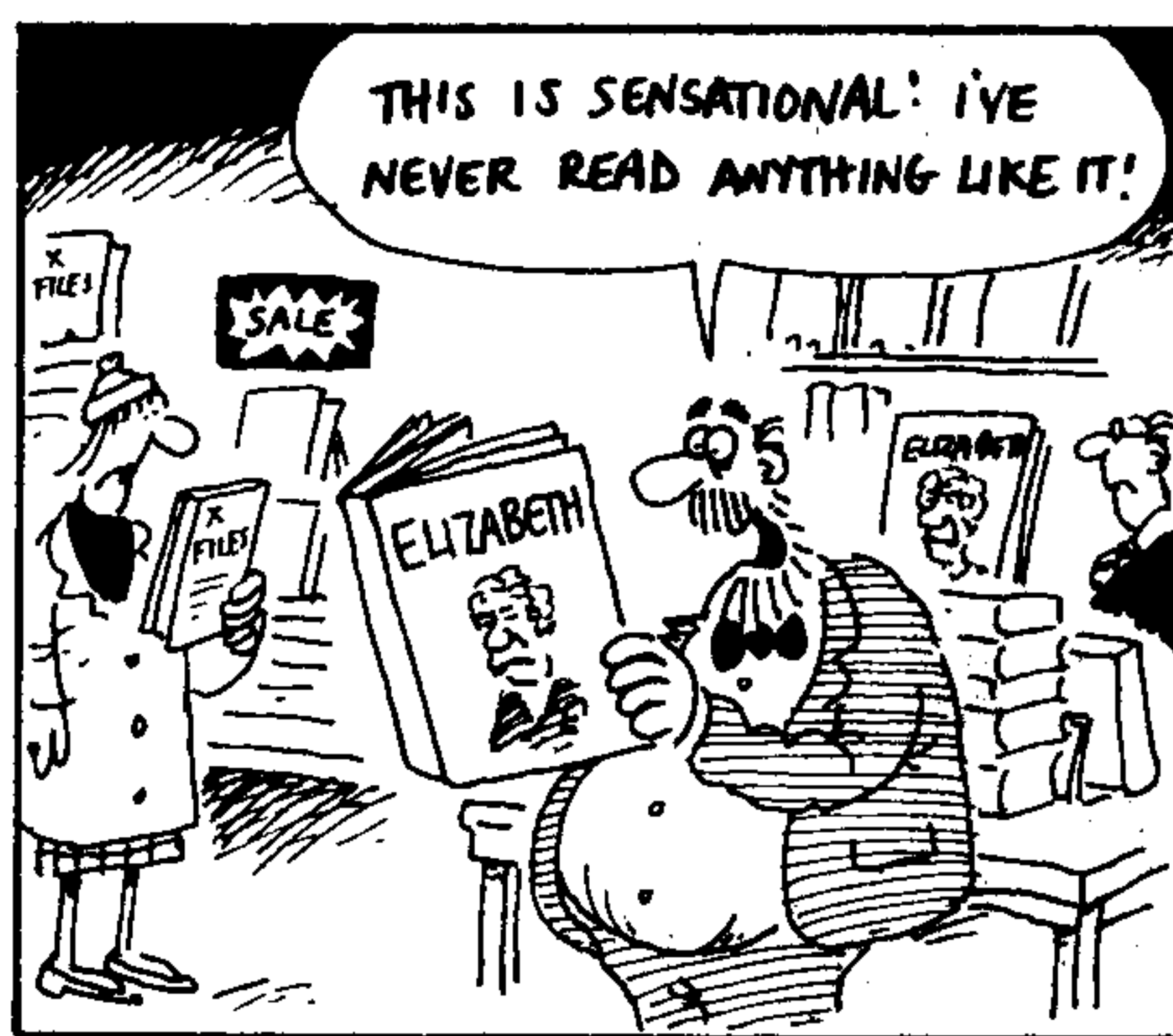
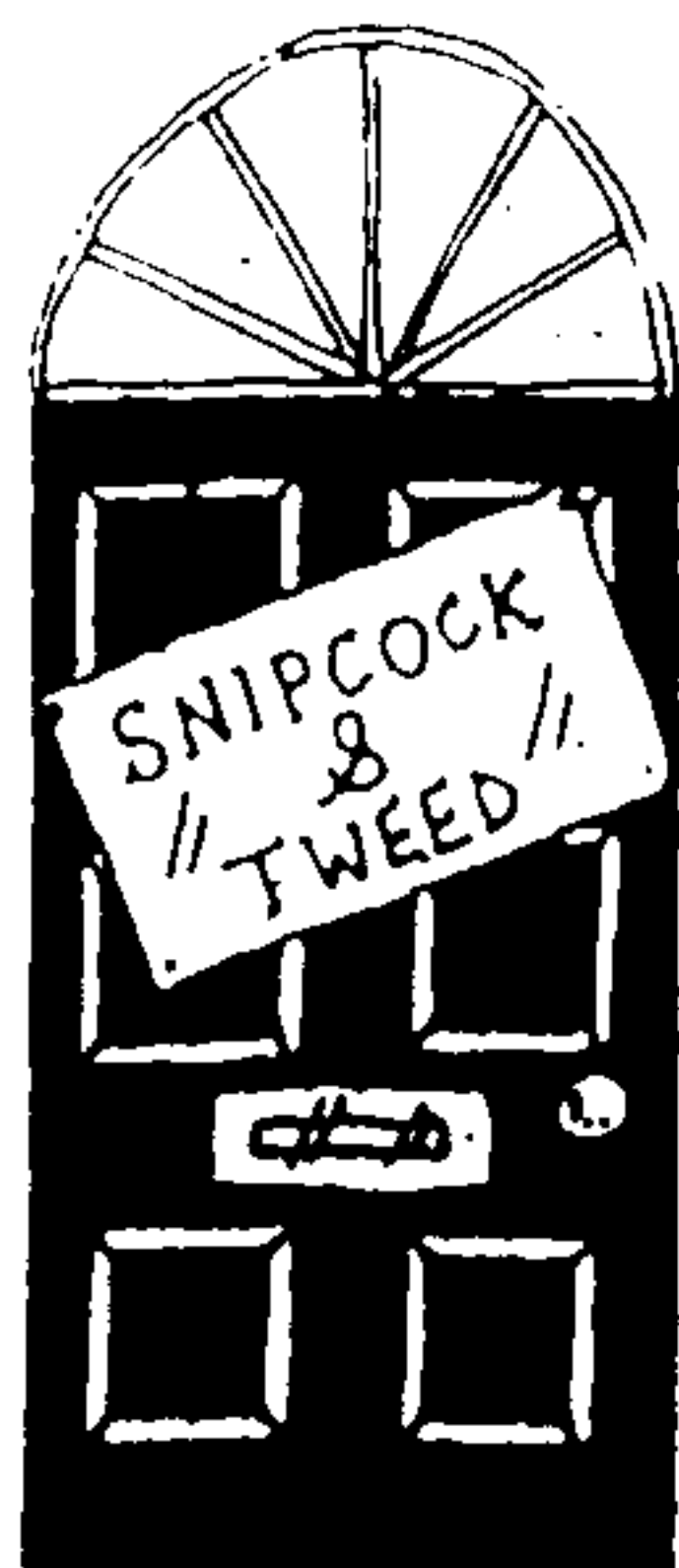
"Third-formers aren't allowed bullet-proof vests, Tomkins"

EDUCATION NEWS

OFSTED, the government education watchdog made up of fairminded, independent worthies, has been inspecting schools in Kent.

One primary school in Sittingbourne received a particularly damning report. The inspectors were most critical of teaching standards there, pointing to a certain class of children they had observed who had failed to learn anything of significance since they had been at the school.

They found the class showed no evidence of even being able to read, write or add up. It later emerged that the class was made up of four and five year olds who had been in school for a total of 10 days.



footnotes

Swindlers List: 2

FOR almost a year five big banks and insurance companies have been trying to prevent six people they swindled from suing them in the courts. The six are victims of the biggest swindle in British history.

Between 1988 and 1994 a million people were hoodwinked by commission-hungry salespeople into buying pension policies incomparably worse than the ones they already had. The banks and insurance firms which employed the sales staff swiped at least £4 billion of ordinary people's money. The whole process was made possible by a 1988 law which was dreamed up in the Centre for Policy Studies and drummed through the Commons by Norman Fowler, former chairman of the Tory party, Tony Newton, now leader of the House, and John Major, prime minister.

The six who sued were two nurses, a school janitor, a legal aid administrator, an assembly line worker and a redundant miner. The miner was sold a complicated and comparatively worthless pension scheme by the merchant bank Hill Samuel despite the fact that he could not read. The companies involved were the Prudential, Gan Life (twice), Hill Samuel, TSB and Irish Life.

These companies have argued that they, the swindlers, were themselves better able than the courts to assess the cases and compensate the people they had swindled. But this month, Judge Raymond Jack came down firmly on the side of the swindled six.

The judge observed that none of the six companies had met the first deadline set by the Securities and Investment Board for dealing with high priority cases — 31 December 1995; that many of the cases were rapidly approaching their "limitation" deadline, which could prevent the plaintiffs from suing; and that no offer had been made by the companies to pay for independent legal advice on the proper levels of compensation. The whole review was bogged down by computer problems. Swindled pensioners were growing old and dying. Yet no more than a tiny handful, less than a tenth of 1 per cent, has had a penny compensation.

The companies argued that their reviews were being "rigorously" supervised by the government-appointed regulator, the Personal Investment Authority. The PIA is run by a board of 20 people. 10 of these are "practitioner directors": David Berridge, chief executive of Scottish Equitable Life, which sells pensions; Danis Brown, partner of the

Independent Financial Advisory Centre, which advises firms which sell pensions; Lawrence Churchill, chief executive of National Westminster Life Assurance, which sells pensions; Allan Daffern, chief executive of Willis Corroon Financial Planning, which sells pensions; Ken Davy, chairman of DBS Financial Management, which sells pensions; Tony Gordon, of Redcliffe Associates PLC, which sells pensions; Peter Gray, chairman of Tunbridge Wells Equitable Friendly Society, which sells pensions; David Mills, a general manager from the Midland Bank, which sells pensions; Michael Pickard, chairman of the Royal London Mutual Insurance Society, which sells pensions; and Jeremy

Willoughby, director and company secretary of Gartmore PLC, which... you get the picture.

There is nothing odd about this, says the PIA spokesman. The whole point of "practitioner directors" is that they are engaged in the activity they are regulating. They are "balanced" by 10 "public interest directors" who are meant to be independent of that activity. But are they?

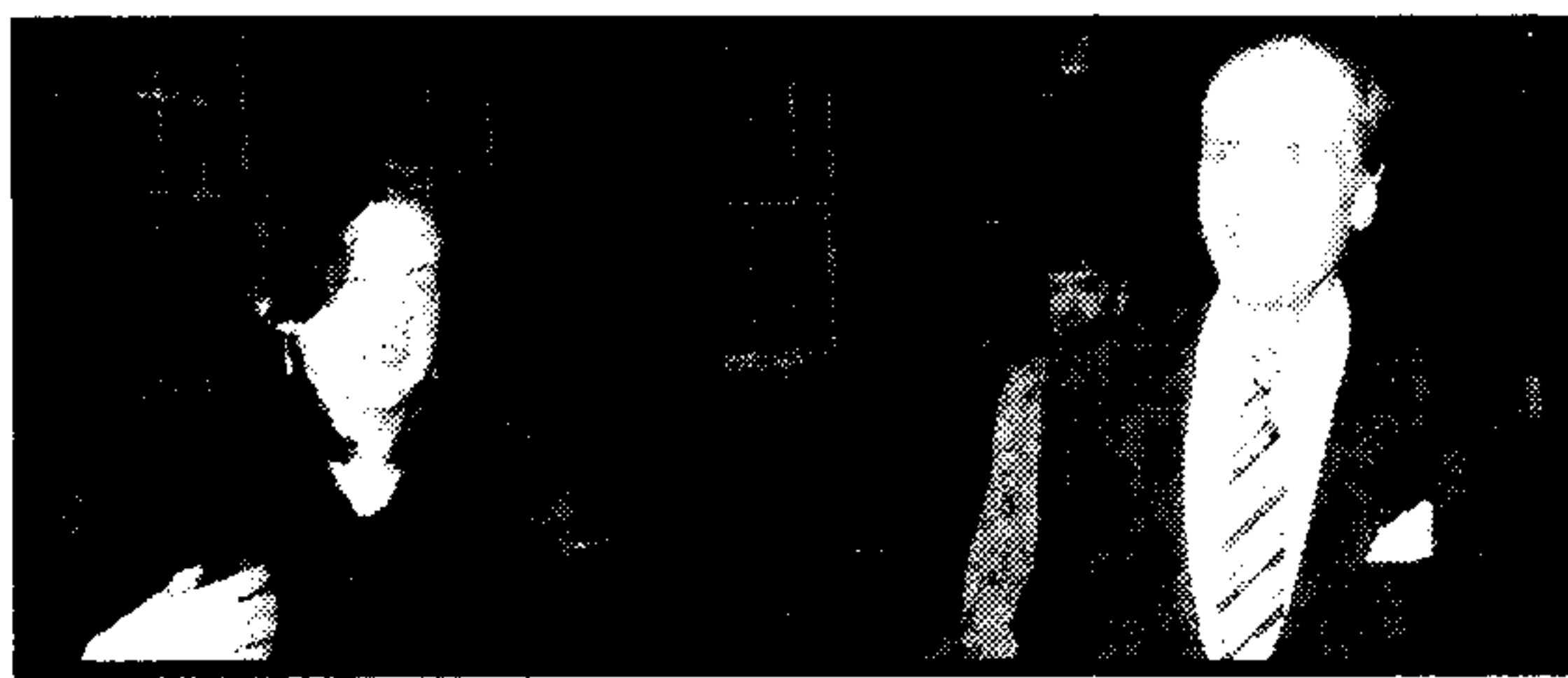
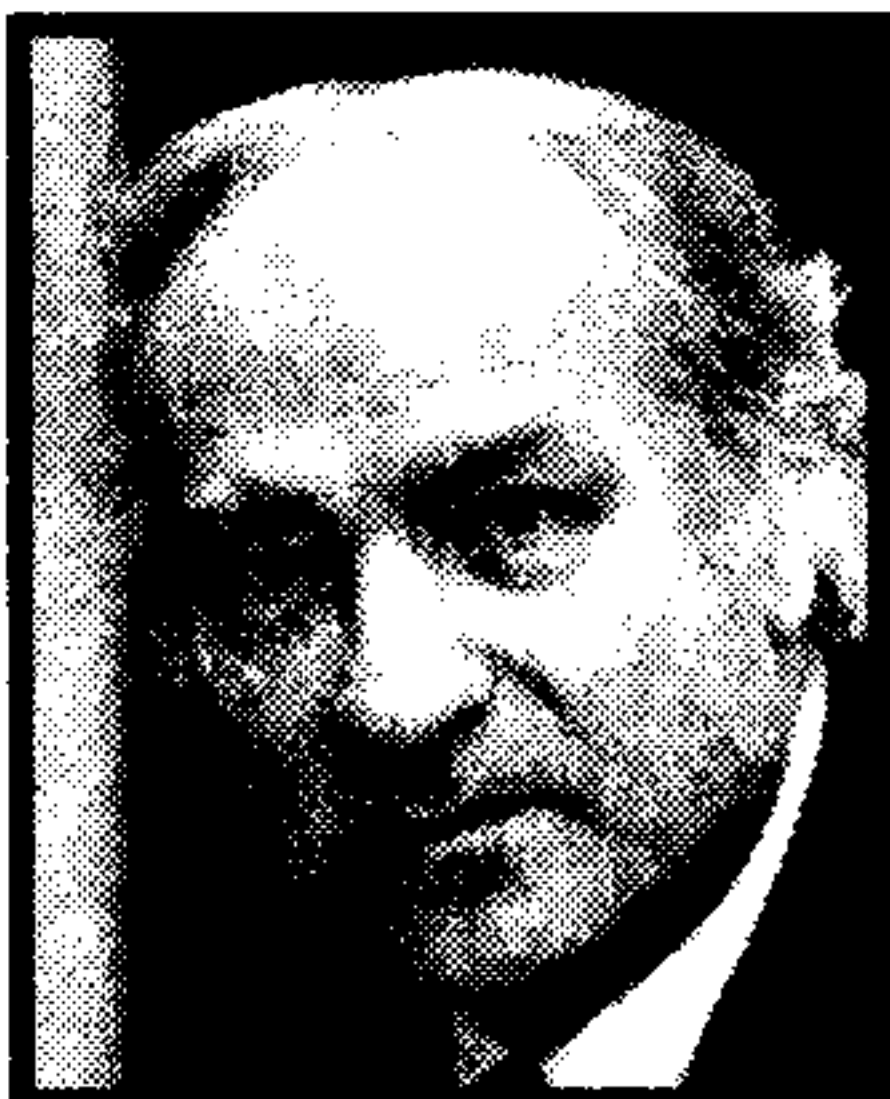
Joe Palmer, the chairman, is former group chief executive of Legal and General, which sells pensions. Sir Terence Heiser is a director of Abbey National plc, whose subsidiaries... sell pensions. A PIA spokesman explained: "The board was aware when it appointed Sir Terry of his non-executive directorship of Abbey National but was satisfied

that he could still bring his considerable expertise to serve on the board."

The other eight "public interest directors" are three "consumer consultants", a former treasury solicitor, the chairman of the Police Complaints

Authority, the political editor of the *Economist*, a former managing partner of the accountants Ernst & Young and Prof David Llewellyn, Professor of Money (*sic*) and chairman of the University of Loughborough Banking Centre, funded by the Midland Bank. Among the 20 regulators there is not a single trades unionist (though trades unions represent tens of thousands of swindled pensioners); nor anyone who can remotely be described as a representative of the swindled million.

The problems of packing the PIA board with so many pensions experts came to the surface in July 1994 with a stinging public rebuke for the life insurance and pensions arm of Barclays Bank. That same month Ken Bignall, vice chairman and managing director of Barclays Financial Services, resigned from the board of the PIA.



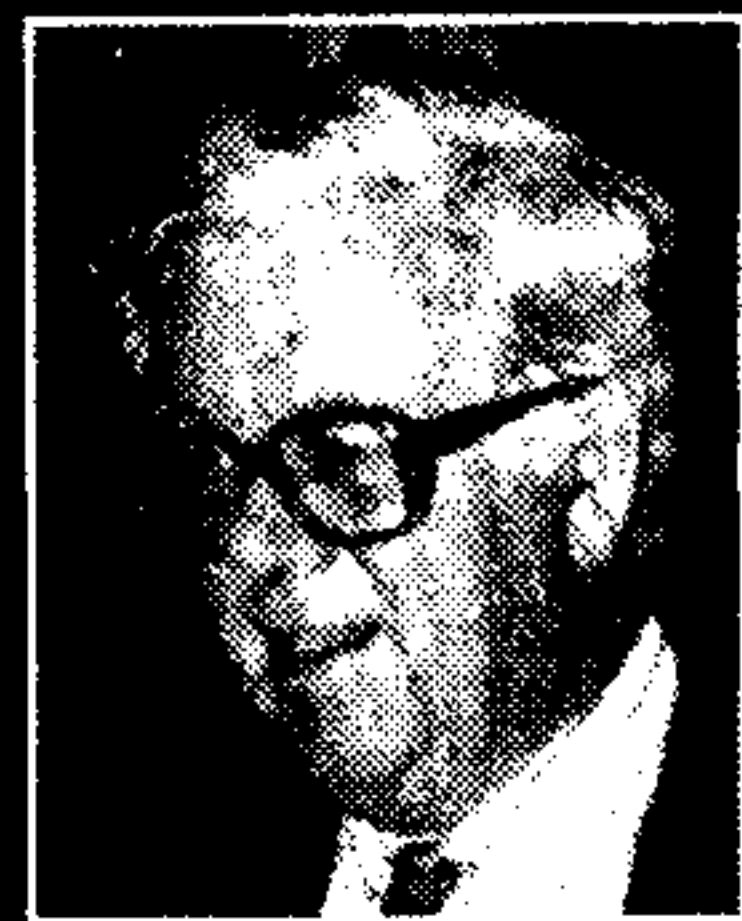
PIA CHIEFS: Sir Terence Heiser (top), chairman Joe Palmer, and chief executive Colette Bowe — and friend

Howe much was that?

■ **COULD** Lord Howe have afforded to pay his own legal costs for his bombarding of the Scott inquiry with objections over the past year?

An old but informative article in *Legal Business Magazine* (Jan/Feb 1994)

suggests he can. It disclosed that Howe's retainer as international adviser to the big American law firm Jones, Day, Reavis and Pogue, for which he still "attends functions and speaks at symposia", was "approximately £250,000".



Beaks of the Week



JPs: Michael Bamford, Georgina Palmer and Dr Alison Lock

■ **LESLIE COX**, an elderly taxi driver in Welwyn Garden City, finds it difficult to get work and has to spend a lot of time at home caring for his wife who is crippled with arthritis.

In 1993 he came up in front of Mid-Herts justices for non-payment of poll tax arrears since 1990 of just over £200. The magistrates sent him to prison for 56 days, and then suspended the sentence if Mr Cox agreed to pay £5 a week.

In December 1993 this was reduced to £4 a week, and somehow for a short time the desperate couple managed to pay up. Then their home was repossessed and they were forced to live in their taxi. Then the taxi was repossessed. They were homeless, had no work and, while they had no address, had no income support. They could not pay their poll tax arrears, and in November 1994 Mr Cox went back to the magistrates to plead for compassion. Mr Michael Bamford, Georgina Palmer and Dr Alison Lock compassionately packed him off to prison for 56 days. Well before he served his time, he was released pending a judicial review of the magistrates' behaviour.

The case has now been heard by Mr Justice Laws. He remarked that Mr Cox's punishment was as severe as if he had been comfortably housed and employed. The JPs, concluded the judge, had not behaved properly or lawfully and the prison sentence was quashed. Costs (of about £5,000) were ordered against Welwyn Hatfield District Council, who sent a barrister to the hearing.

PS: Eye readers will recall the Booth case last week in which Stoke magistrates appealed against an order for costs after they had been found to have illegally sent a mental patient to prison for poll tax arrears. Before the hearing they wrote a desperate plea to be let off the costs. "The degree of personal publicity which these matters have attracted, including an article in a recent edition of *Private Eye*, is of great concern to the justices," they whined.

Mr Justice Owen was not impressed. He dismissed the appeal.

MR BUNG THE BREWER

WHEN a popular brewery (Gedling, Notts) was threatened by last year's merger between Scottish & Newcastle Breweries and Courage, Andrew Mitchell, social security minister, did not panic.

He denounced the leader of Nottingham city council, who was leading a campaign to save the brewery, for interfering in matters he did not understand. Mr Mitchell understood these matters very well. His entry in the MPs' register of interests declared "periodic contributions to my constituency party" by the brewery's owners, Youngers, a Scottish and Newcastle subsidiary.

Mr Mitchell got a bashing from the *Nottingham Evening Post* which published on its front page a copy of a £5,000 cheque donated to the Gedling Tory party by Youngers, together with a chummy letter to Mr Mitchell from the local Youngers boss. The *Post* asked cheekily: "Which side are you on, Andrew Mitchell?"



BATTLER: Andrew Dickson MP

As the prospects darkened for the brewery, Mr Mitchell's attitude changed — and so did the *Post*'s. A leader on 14 December said Mr Mitchell was "battling to protect jobs in his constituency" and praised the MP for "fighting, not as a minister, which he is, but on behalf of the people he represents".

But the battling and the fighting were all to no avail. As a new year's present to the area, the brewery was abruptly closed with the loss of at least 250 jobs. Somehow the *Post* forgot to demand that the

Gedling Tory party should hand back that £5,000, and any other handouts from the firm which was sacking Mr Mitchell's constituents.

Five other facts may be relevant.

1. Scottish & Newcastle Breweries' recent takeover of Courage should have been referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission (MMC), but the reference was stopped by the government.
2. Scottish & Newcastle Breweries are regular and generous contributors to the Tory party.
3. The *Daily Mail*'s recent take-over of the *Nottingham Evening Post* was referred to the monopolies commission, which denounced it as "not in the public interest". The MMC recommendation was rejected by the government which allowed the take-over to go ahead, so the *Post* was swallowed by the *Daily Mail*.
4. The *Daily Mail* is, and always has been, an unswerving supporter of the Tory party.
5. The Tory party is utterly opposed to monopoly, except where it profits a firm which gives it money or a Tory newspaper.



MOBILE CHAIR: Tessa Baring

Charity begins at home

■ **MEETINGS of the national lotteries charities board are constantly being disrupted by board members leaving the room, staying out for quite a time and coming back again. The problem is conflict of interest.**

For instance, recently the board considered an application from Barnardos for £600,000. The board's chairwoman, Tessa Baring, is a trustee of Barnardos.

Then there were applications from Oxfam (£450,000) and Project Fullemploy (£242,000). Amir Bhatia, a board member, is a trustee of both charities.

A board spokeswoman told the *Eye*: "What happens is that when the relevant item arrives, they have to leave the room and don't come back until they're called back." Most disrupting.

All three applications sailed through.

This sceptic Isles

■ **WHEN he refuted the allegation that he had complied in the illegal sale of guns to Iran by his company BMARC, Jonathan "Shining Sword" Aitken quoted in his defence a former fellow BMARC director, Major General Donald Isles.**



& THE TRUSTY SHIELD OF BRITISH FAIR PLAY

knew nothing of the eventual destination of Project Lisi, a huge consignment of naval guns, some of which were exported to Singapore by BMARC when he was a director. "My view of these matters," he said, "has now been

publicly supported by four former directors of the company, including General Isles who was responsible for the contract."

Whoops! On 17 January General Isles gave evidence to the Commons select committee on trade and industry, which is investigating the BMARC affair. Said Isles: "I was not in charge of the Lisi programme. Certainly not. The media has got it totally wrong."



MODERN MAJOR GENERAL ISLES

So, apparently, had his former colleague Aitken.

An engaging new personality in the arms-to-Iran-and-Iraq saga was introduced in General Isles's evidence. Again and again the general referred to the enormous help the company had from their local MP, Douglas Hogg with any difficulties it encountered with proposed exports. "We used him to put our case up to the right people," he explained.

If Mr Hogg was indeed lobbying the government on such matters in the late 1980s, he was very well placed to do so. He was, after all, a member of the government — at the home office from 1986, and at the DTI in 1989 and 1990.

MOTT THE SCRUPLE

■ **Andrew Green is not the only senior foreign office mandarin to take his place on the board of directors of a prominent private company — in his case Vickers Military Systems which sells battle tanks to countries like Saudi Arabia, where Mr Green will shortly become British Ambassador. The Foreign Office insist there is no question of a conflict of interest, though Mr Green will leave the Vickers board when he becomes an ambassador.**

Kevin Tebbit is another. Like Mr Green, Mr Tebbit, 49, is a high-flying Under-Secretary. He supervises British interests in the Far East and recently became a non-executive director of the international management group of Croydon-based Mott MacDonald Group, a consulting engineering combine specialising in water projects abroad, notably in the Philippines and Sri Lanka.

BADGERLINE BADGERED

■ **STUDENTS at Bath university were fed up with the high fares charged by the big private bus company Badgerline, so their union persuaded a small local operator, Streamline, to run a special bus service from the university to the city.**

Streamline charged a return fare of 90 pence (compared to Badgerline's £1.15) and a 60p single (compared to 90p), plus a cheap ten-week travelcard.

On the first day of the new service in the new term, Badgerline lost about 70 per cent of its passengers on the route. So it promptly flooded the route with buses driven by reserve bus drivers brought in from all over Bath. The usual tactics by the new bus monopolies to run their rivals off the road have been used to the full: Badgerline buses suddenly cutting in front of their competitors as they approach stops, sudden offers of "free rides" etc, etc.

For the moment the tactics aren't working. The student boycott of Badgerline is standing firm, supported by the people of Bath who don't much like their upstart new bus company and would love to see it humiliated.





In the City

SO NOW we know. Not only is fraud a victimless crime. It also, as the Maxwell verdicts prove, produces crimeless victims — more than 30,000 of them!

"Cap'n Bob innocent shock" was the effective outcome of the acquittal of Kevin Maxwell of conspiring with his monstrous father. A verdict which surprised those who uncovered the £440 million hole in the Maxwell-run pension funds.

But then the Maxwell jury was successfully invited by those representing the dutiful sons either to convict all those City yes men who for years took the Fat Controller's money and never objected to his use and abuse of pensioners' assets, or to convict the dead man, even though he was, as Kevin Maxwell put it, tough but fair and always legal.

Maxwell pensioners will have been touched to learn from his loyal son that the great pension pillager was "very sensitive to pension issues" and "realised they were very important to employee morale".

Both in and out of the witness box, Kevin Maxwell and his co-defendants, brother Ian and adviser Larry Trachtenberg, ran a refined version of the Nuremburg Defence. But unlike Nuremburg they did not face a jury of experts in the law as it relates to obeying orders.

As expected the verdicts unleashed the usual barrage of fire at the Serious Farce Office and its hapless director, George Staple, who responded by disclosing that he did not intend to carry on beyond next year when his contract ends. He should be so lucky to be offered another contract! The man who declared a year ago that "these days it's almost impossible to commit fraud" is part of the problem, not the solution. Staple was most unlikely to have been offered another contract had he been unwise enough to ask for one. It was already accepted before the Maxwell fiasco that he was passed his sell by date.

For the SFO, which Staple has run longer than any other director (since 1992), the Maxwell verdicts merely highlight its failure to perform when challenged by the best and brightest in court. Time and time again — as with Maxwell — the SFO legal team is outwitted and outgunned. The trial becomes a mismatch and the defendants walk.

Consider the SFO's dismal record. In the seven years to April 1995 it prosecuted 312 defendants in 138 trials. It obtained 194 convictions. A conviction rate of 62 percent, right? Wrong. The conviction rate is padded by 112 guilty pleas. Deduct those from the win-loss column and the results are very different and not at all flattering to the Elm Street fraudbusters. The SFO obtained convictions against only 82 defendants whom it prosecuted at trial, compared with 110 not guilty verdicts. The real conviction rate therefore is just under 43 percent. Somewhat different from the 75 percent figure trumpeted in the SFO's last report — cases in which it obtained at least one conviction. Since then it has won nine (including at least three pleas), lost five.

Hardly surprising therefore that with legal aid always available defendants are prepared to take the SFO on in court. For where the most determined

defendants and resourceful lawyers are involved, the SFO all too often gives the impression that it would be hard pushed to convict Hitler in Israel.

Most of its problems were on clear view during the Maxwell marathon. Despite slashing the trial to two charges and three defendants, this supposed test of honesty or dishonesty required some 70 prosecution witnesses and most of five months. But despite the long list of suits, nowhere was there room for a single Maxwell pensioner to humanise the personal cost of the fraud. The SFO and its mogadon mouthpiece Alan Suckling QC clearly felt such evidence irrelevant. So the only suffering the jury heard about was that of Kevin Maxwell.

The SFO chose the same team to prosecute the Maxwell brothers that had prosecuted another abuser of pensioners, Peter Clowes — case controller John Tate, who had been keen to return to the customs, a transfer unlikely to be resisted now, and Suckling. Not that Barlow Clowes had been an unqualified success. True Clowes and one associate had been convicted. But five other defendants had been either acquitted or not proceeded against. And a deaf, dumb and blind man would have been struggling not to convict Clowes, against whom a number of investors testified with tears in their eyes.

Furthermore there were big difference between the cases. Clowes had personally plundered the Barlow Clowes' investors funds on a grand scale. This was never the case with the Maxwell brothers, although there would have been indirect benefit had the empire survived. Perhaps most important of all, Clowes had nobody else, no missing man, to blame — a defence that always makes prosecutors nervous.

Often a victorious defendant has been represented by one of the Bar's stars faced by a lesser legal light. Rare, as was the case in Guinness One, is the legal firepower equally matched. The reasoning is simple. Winning a prosecution for the SFO is unlikely to generate the kudos and future work of obtaining a Maxwell acquittal. And if the defendant loses it was always a hopeless case. No wonder therefore defendants often find themselves better served than the SFO by the Bar's hired guns.

In court Suckling was constantly outshone by the deft eloquence of Alun Jones QC representing Kevin Maxwell. Suckling described the key Maxwell defences — dependent on a fax waved by his father that nobody else ever saw and a conversation with his father that nobody else corroborated — as "laughable". Not surprisingly the jury, encouraged by the Jones' siren song, failed to see the Suckling joke.

But then they were also not able to see key elements of the big picture. They were not allowed to know that Kevin Maxwell faced another six charges of conspiracy to defraud four banks, Mirror Group Newspapers and *Mirror* and Maxwell pension funds on other transactions exceeding £100 million. Ian Maxwell and Trachtenberg also faced further similar charges. These charges were separated out to reduce the length of the trial! But the price was that the scale of the alleged fraud placed before the jury though large (£122 million) appeared to be merely two transactions.

Those observers who knew all this and the background of the power crazed monster that was Cap'n Bob found it hard to see how the Maxwells could not be convicted. But it is much easier for the City wise. A few days in Court 22 would have raised the sort of doubts that jurors often seize upon when asked to decide on a complex matter "beyond a reasonable doubt".

Alas, nobody has yet defined what is a reasonable doubt when juries are asked to decide matters beyond their experience and possibly their comprehension. Doubts which an accountant, banker or other financial sophisticate may not have could be all too worrisome to anyone without that background. But of course accountants, bankers and other City folk are the very people who never make it on to City juries because they are either excluded or exclude themselves because they do not have 100 days to spare.

For similar reasons those who have no excuse to avoid a City jury trial also often find those defendants who give evidence persuasive. Kevin Maxwell was clearly believed by the jury when he truthfully told how his father ran the business and how nobody ever said no. So too was George Walker when he explained that he ran Brent Walker by signing important documents without reading them. So too was Guinness lawyer Tom Ward when he claimed he too was only obeying orders and believed everything was legal. Sadly the man who gave him those orders, Ernest Saunders, was not believed when he testified at an earlier trial. And so worried was the SFO that a jury would take to cheeky chappy Terry Ramsden that it did a deal rather than go to trial and risk losing.

There will be much talk post-Maxwell about taking the Roskill route to jury-less trials, but this is as unlikely now as at anytime in the 10 years since it was first recommended. Emotive pleas against losing the right to trial by jury — despite the fact that only a tiny minority of defendants exercise that right — will prevail.

What is to be done? Hiring better quality QCs and recruiting better quality SFO lawyers would be a start. And if Roskill courts of judge and assessors are not to be, then introducing plea bargaining to obtain deals with the bad men in suits. It works in the United States and, as Nick Leeson proved only last month, it works in Singapore.

The same legal lobby that demands juries should be retained for complex fraud trial marathons and opposes plea bargains also resists research into how and why jurors decide the way they do. The suspicion is that that is because the answers might not be comforting. American research indicates that in many cases, especially those involving complex commercial matters, juries decide on anything but the facts.

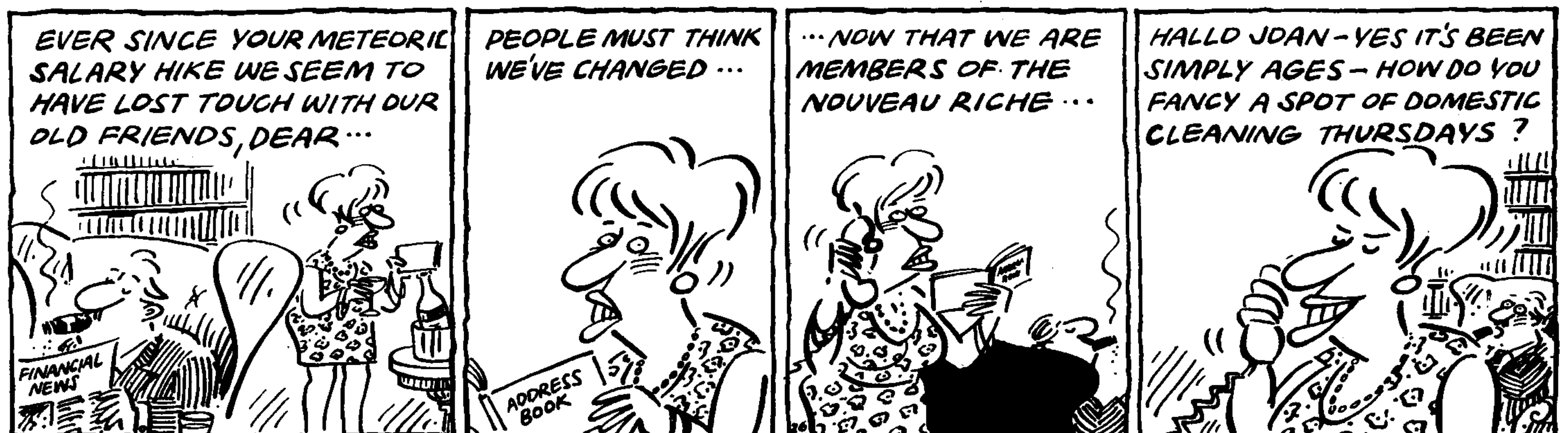
As a study of the New York jurors who acquitted Imelda Marcos and Saudi fixer Adnan Khashoggi of plundering the Philippines via mazy Manhattan property deals concluded: "Some jurors succumb all too easily to emotional appeals. Some are stymied by the least bit of complexity. Many filter facts through such a thick mesh of prejudice that the facts become unrecognisable. Common sense mutates into mutual delusion."

As for Robert Maxwell, the inscription in Jerusalem should now read: "He dived in vain."

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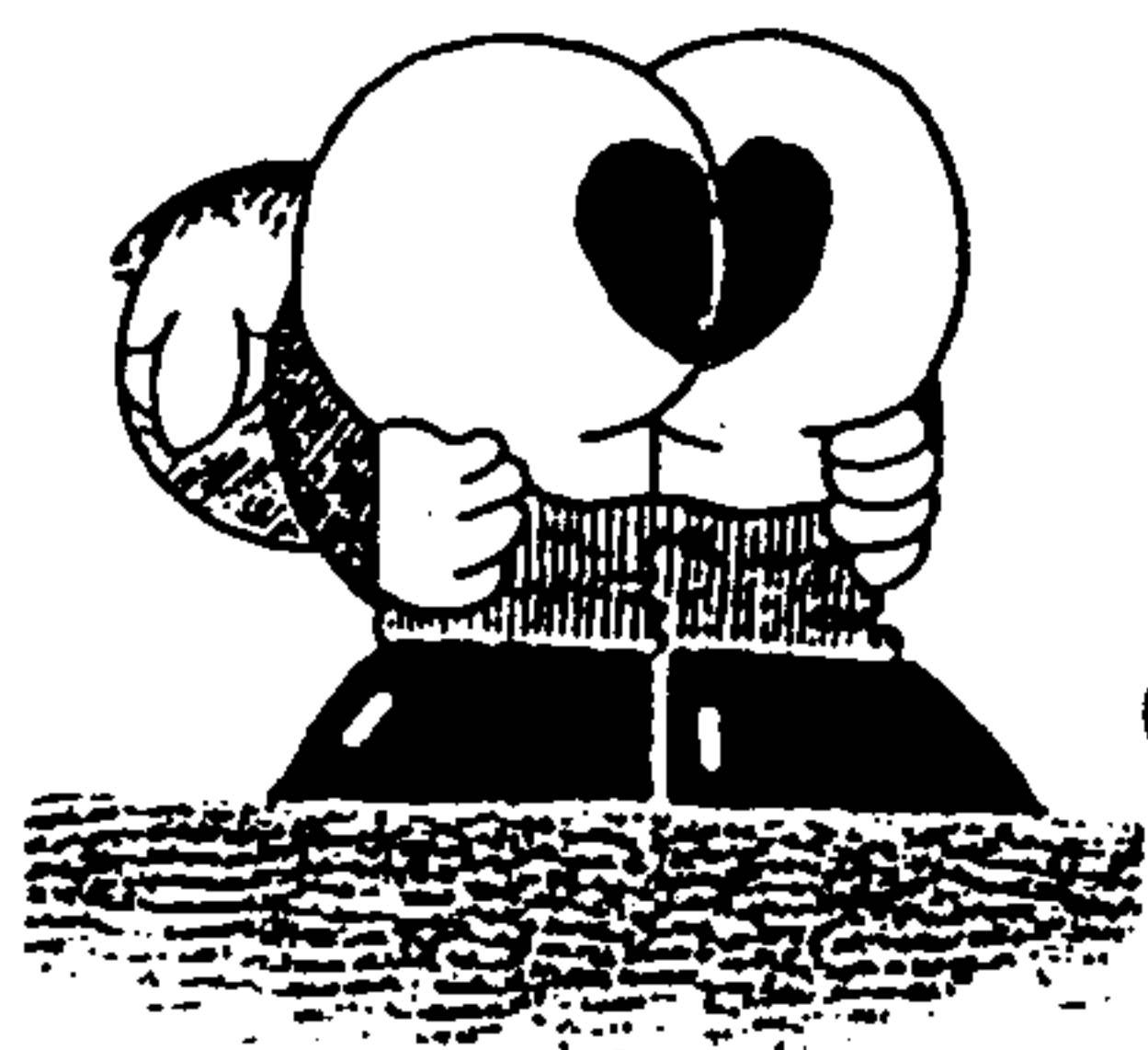
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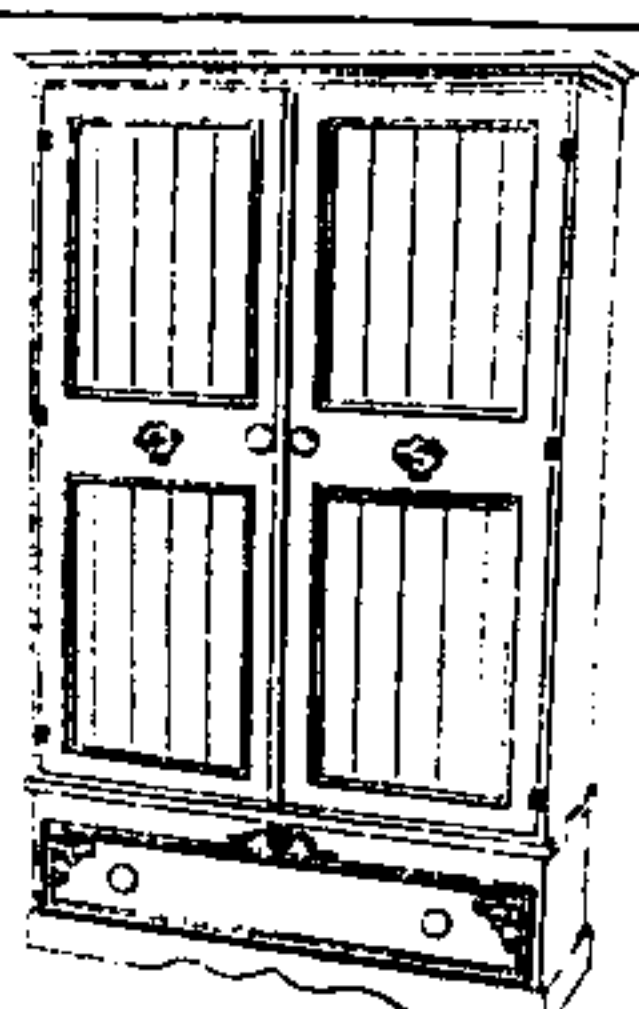
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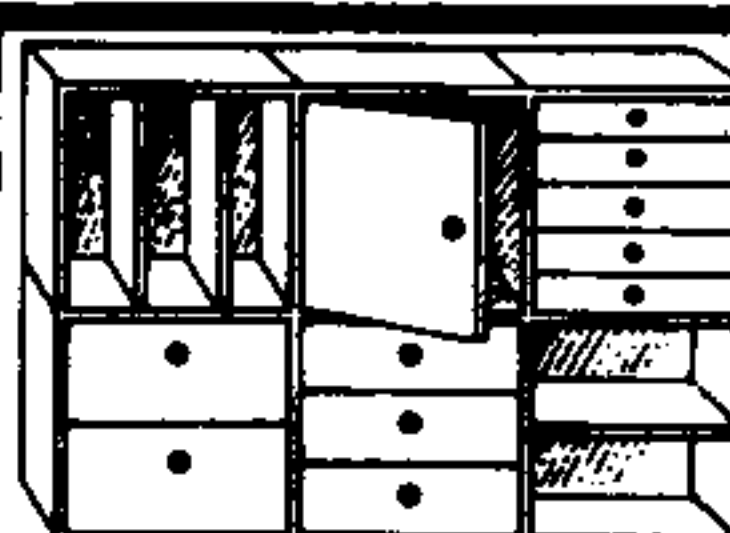


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